The Demise of the Jewish Community in Afghanistan, 1933-1952

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Abstract

This thesis examines the demise of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. In the early 1930s, an influx of Soviet refugees was a source of great concern for the Afghan government. Bukharan Jewish refugees were considered very dangerous, and potential Soviet agents. Afghan suspicion then extended to the local Jewish population. Security considerations were linked to the economic sector, and a series of discriminatory regulations were enacted against the entire Jewish community. Jews were forbidden from engaging in trade, and had to reside in Herat, Kabul or Kandahar. These policies caused impoverishment and an internal refugee crisis.

The Afghan government based its plan for economic development on a monopolisation system, and much of the discrimination that the Jewish community faced was directed through the Ministry of National Economy and the Afghan National Bank. This strategy was adopted ostensibly as a way to limit Soviet influence in Afghanistan, and benefitted the Pashtun majority.

Historiographically, the most contentious debate centres on the extent of Nazi influence in Afghanistan. 'Abd al-Majid Khan, the instigator of nativist economic policies, was also the primary negotiator with Berlin. The Third Reich influenced some aspects of Afghan policy, however it was predominantly indirect and confined to the economic sector. After World War II, the economy plunged, and a famine engulfed the region. When the state of Israel was established, Jews in Afghanistan saw it as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and most left as soon as legal emigration was authorized.

This work shows that once nationalism appears on the horizon, and the processes of modern development begin, the condition of a very small, easily distinguishable, specialized group is endangered. It also examines the rich congruities between the political and economic history of Afghanistan and one of its smallest minorities.

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Abbreviations for Archival Sources

AIU	Alliance Israëlite Universelle, Paris
BoD	Board of Deputies of British Jews, records located at London Metropolitan Archives
CDJC	Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris
CZA	Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem
DGFP	*Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945.* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954.)
IOL	India Office and Library, part of the British Library, London
PRO	Public Records Office, Kew Gardens
Q d'O	Quai d'Orsay, Foreign Office, Paris
USNA	United States National Archives, College Park, Maryland

Various *Va'adot*: An Explanatory Note

Va'ad (*va'ada* [f.], *va'adot* [pl.]) is a general term in Hebrew used to describe any committee. While the most commonly known *va'ad* outside of Israel is the *Va'ad Leumi*, or Executive Committee of the *Yishuv*, many other organisations appear in this work, most notably those of Afghanistani Jews in Palestine and later Israel.

The first *va'ad* active amongst the Afghanistani Jewish community was founded in Jerusalem. In the 1930s, it was known as the *Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan b'Eretz Yisrael*. Its English name was the Committee of the Afghanistan Jewish Community in Palestine. Here it is called the Jerusalem Va'ad.

The second Afghanistani *va'ad* was founded in Tel Aviv in the late 1940s, and called the *Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan*. In English, its title was translated as the Committee of Jewish Immigrants of Afghanistan in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. (In Hebrew, however, the term refers to a united organisation.) This work will refer to the committee as the Tel Aviv Va'ad.

After the Afghanistani community began to arrive in Israel *en masse*, a second *va'ad* was formed in Tel Aviv. It was called: *Ha-Va'ada l'Tipul b'Olei Afghanistan*, the Committee to Care for Immigrants from Afghanistan. It is not known if this was a fully independent organisation, or an offshoot of the first Tel Aviv Va'ad. At any rate, this committee did not engage in much political activity, and it is not referred to in an abbreviated format.

Also mentioned in the text is the *Va'ad Edat Sefardim*, the Committee of the Sephardic Community, an umbrella organisation for Asian and African Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Glossary of Terms

Ahl al-dhimma	People of the covenant, protected people. (Arabic)
'Aliya	'To ascend,' or immigrate to Israel. (Hebrew)
Allah Daad	'G-d gave,' refers to 1839 forcible conversion of Mashhad's Jewish community. (Persian)
Anus (**Anusim**, pl.)	One who is forcibly converted, or raped. (Hebrew)
Ashkenazi	Jewish community originating in Eastern Europe and Germany. (Hebrew)
Badal	Blood feud. (Pashtu)
Beit Din	Law court. (Hebrew)
Chala	'Half-Baked,' derisive term for forcible converts to Islam in the Emirate of Bukhara. (Tajik)
Eretz Yisrael	The Land of Israel. (Hebrew)
Erev	Evening, often refers to the eve of a holiday. (Hebrew)
Firman	A royal or governmental decree. (Persian)
Galut	Exile, Diaspora. (Hebrew)
Gzerah	Evil decree. (Hebrew)
Halachah	Jewish religious law. (Hebrew)
Hammam	Bath, often public. (Arabic)
Hevrah Kadishah	'Holy Society,' association that prepares a body for burial. (Hebrew)
(Ha-) Histadrut ha-Tzioni ha-'Olamit	World Zionist Organisation. (Hebrew)
Jadid al-Islam	'New to Islam,' term for new converts, most often refers to Mashhadi *anusim*. (Arabic)
Jadidim	The Hebraicized plural for those who became Jadid al-Islam.

Jizya	Tribute or poll tax levied on non-Muslims. (Arabic)
Kalantar	Literally: 'bigger,' secular community leader, or chief personage in a town, often responsible for tax collection. (Persian and Judeo-Persian)
Khelat	Robes of honour, often bestowed by the ruler. (Arabic)
Kashrut	Jewish dietary laws. (Hebrew)
Kehilat Kedoshah	'Holy Community.' (Hebrew)
Loya Jirga	Grand tribal assembly. (Pashtu)
Mahallah	Neighbourhood, quarter of a town. (Arabic, Persian)
Majlis	Assembly or Parliament. (Arabic)
Marrano	Literally: 'pig,' derogatory term for forcible convert, especially to Catholicism. (Spanish)
Mashhade	'Hair comber,' older woman who accompanied and assisted the bride, also known as *abruchin* in northern Afghanistan, and *dimvardar* in Mashhad. (Judeo-Persian)
Mikvah	Ritual public bath, especially important to maintain family purity laws. (Hebrew)
Mizrahi	'Eastern,' refers to Jews from Asia and Africa, who are not descendents from the Spanish expulsion. (Hebrew)
Moledet	Homeland, place where one was born. (Hebrew)
Muhajirun	Migrants. (Arabic)
Nassi	Secular community leader. (Hebrew)
'Olim ('**Oleh** [m.], '**Oleh** [f.])	Immigrant to Israel, literally: one who has ascended. (Hebrew)
Sardar	Military commander. (Persian)
Sephardi	Jews whose ancestors originated in Spain. (Hebrew)

Shahadah	Muslim confession of faith: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." (Arabic)
Shaliah	Emissary, one who is sent. (Hebrew)
Shehita	Kosher butchering practices. (Hebrew)
Shurut 'Umar	Pact of Umar, restrictions placed upon non-Muslims. (Arabic)
Sochnut l'Eretz Yisrael	Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel. (Hebrew)
Va'ad(a)	Committee. (Hebrew)
Va'ad Leumi l'Eretz Yisrael	General Council (also known as the Executive Committee) of the Yishuv. (Hebrew)
Waqf	Property turned into an irrevocable religious trust. (Arabic)
Yishuv	Jewish community in *Eretz Yisrael*, most often used to refer to the pre-1948 population. (Hebrew)

Note on Hebrew Transliteration

According to Mrs. Ilana Tahan, Hebrew Librarian at the India Office, there is no universally recognised system of Hebrew transliteration. This causes a series of difficulties for researchers. Often titles are simply translated, as in the Israeli journal for Mizrahi studies, *Pe'amim.* In an attempt to assist readers unfamiliar with the Hebrew script, this work provides a transliteration based on the Library of Congress' system, accompanied with an English translation.

Some modifications were made to the Library of Congress's system. They are as follows:
Vuv (ו) is written as a '**v**' not as a 'w.'
Tzade (צ) is written as '**tz**' not as 'ts.'
Aleph (א) is written as an '**a**' not as a mere ', except when silent, and then it is not written at all.
'Ain (ע) is written with an '**e** or an '**a**, depending upon the vowel.
The normally silent vowel sheva (ְ) is written as a' when it is part of a conjunction or prefix. (Such as b', l', v')
The mark (which looks like a hirik) under the koof and het has been omitted.
Finally, no differentiation has been made between ' and ' .

The author hopes this modified system will facilitate ease of reading.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Lewis Henry Koplik, MD (1940-1999), reproductive freedom fighter, who defended the rights of women and prison inmates. He would have been so proud. זכרונו מתוק כדבש – his memory is as sweet as honey on the lips.

Acknowledgements

Many people helped me on the path towards this doctorate degree. Most of this degree was completed with the assistance of my third supervisor, Ulrike Freitag. However, I will be confining my poetic language to these acknowledgements, as Dr. Freitag did not want me bringing metaphorical flowers to the text of my thesis. Nevertheless, I thank her for giving me baskets full of support and encouragement, as fragrant as any lilac, rose, sunflower or daisy.

A series of teachers helped to ignite my interest in history. At age fourteen, my history instructor, Tucker Curtis encouraged me to speak up for what I thought right, even when the entire class was trying to shout me down. This lesson has served me well. Professor Emeritus Alain Silvera was, and continues to be a devoted mentor. His classes in Middle Eastern history at Bryn Mawr College set the foundation for graduate study. More importantly, the vast knowledge he shared, along with ceaseless warmth and good humour, still infuse the pattern of my days. Professor Patricia Risso, of the University of New Mexico, offered advice, suggestions, and encouragement for the times I spent in Albuquerque. Professor Emeritus Michael Zand, of Hebrew University made sure there were no glaring omissions in my work. Dr. Audrey Burton explained archival puzzles and was supportive of my early hypotheses, providing countless tips for further research. Dr. Shirin Akiner introduced me to Central Asian studies, and encouraged me to study Bukharan Jewry, which ultimately led to research on Afghanistan. Alexander Rimsky helped to infuse in me a love for spoken Russian, while Ziva Newman reinforced my affection for Hebrew, and treated me as tenderly as her own daughters.

In the SOAS history department, Doctors Ben Fortna, Avril Powell and Xun Zhou, as well as Professors David Arnold and Ian Brown all provided assistance. David Gibbon (alas no longer) of the registry office, and librarian Peter Salinger each offered valued directions from his own area of expertise. Jakob Rigi helped translate documents from Persian, while Rachel Greenfeld, Eran Weyel, and especially Nili Heled clarified Hebrew texts, particularly those written in Rashi script.

I consulted the following institutions in London, and am grateful for all of the assistance extended to me. The Board of Deputies of British Jews granted me access to their holdings at the London Metropolitan Archives, thus enabling me to become the first person to examine the records on Afghanistani Jewry in detail. Librarian Ilana Tahan of the India Office Records and Library was particularly helpful in tracking down Israeli journal articles. I also frequented the British Library, Public Records Office, the Jewish Chronicle's archives, as well as the libraries at the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies, Senate House, the Warburg Institute, Institute for Historical Research, University College of London, and the German Historical Institute of London.

In London, several communities sustained me through this journey. They include Congregation Beit Klal Yisrael, especially Jon and Janet Burden, Sef Townsend, and serendipitous informants, Shulamit and Amanda Ambalu. The London Goodenough Trust (now known as Goodenough College) provided a warm home for an often-struggling graduate student. The highlight of my years there was the Channel Swim Team of 1998, which taught me how similar swimming the channel and writing a PhD are. They both take enormous amounts of stamina and courage, facing the uncertainty of a deep sea, unpredictable weather and currents, the cold, the tides, and of course an occasional jellyfish, oil tanker, and even in moments of triumph - the French coast guard can still spoil the party (no more than five minutes on the beach)!

In Paris, I consulted the archives and library of the Alliance Israëlite Universelle. Dr. Jean-Claude Kuperminc, Dr. Jean-Jacques Zilberberg, and Mlle. Rose Levyne all shared their expertise, and extended me special consideration as a non-native French-speaking researcher. At the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, the respected librarian, Mme. Sara Halperyn (ז"ל) helped me find sources unavailable elsewhere. While the archives of the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, at the Quai d'Orsay were very difficult to access, once I was allowed to enter the building, their staff was helpful, and occasionally quite friendly.

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In the United States, I consulted the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, as well as the Center for Near East Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson. The highlight of the latter trip was meeting Professor Ludwig Adamec and wife Rahella, as well as Mrs. Adamec's daughter, Helena Malekyar and her husband Amin Tarzi. All spent time with me discussing my research, and Dr. Tarzi kindly shared some his documents on 'Abd al-Rahman Khan. I feel very honoured to have been hosted by such prominent scholars, and members of a former royal family of Afghanistan.

In January 2003, I was invited to participate in a conference entitled: "Boundaries, States, Nations on the Frontiers of Empire: Afghanistan and Its Neighbors." Duke University sponsored my attendance. I was fortunate enough to learn from many eminent scholars including: Professors John Richards, Robert Canfield, Scott Levi, Senzil Nawid, Christine Noelle, M. Hasan Kakar, and Robert McChesney. All were interested in my work, and very encouraging.

A great many friends extending throughout five continents offered help, support, encouragement and love on this vast journey. They fortified me with every kind of assistance, from the most practical to the sublime. While some faded away to other places and other lives, their gifts of generosity remain, with the deepest gratitude.

Lev Weinstock, as well as his parents Nathan and Micheline, sister Tamara and husband Marc Kawam were very supportive throughout my research. Lev designed a bibliographic program for my precise needs, and encouraged my long process of writing. He also raised up Bronislaw Karmi to be a profoundly good, sensitive and loving soul. Tamara introduced me to No'am Bar'Am-Ben Yossef's work. Nathan and Micheline sent me many articles and books, and Micheline even interviewed me for Brussels' Jewish radio station.

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As I began, so I end with family. To my brother Joel Koplik, who had the uncanny ability to call and ask me if I was working only when I wasn't! For his intuition, protectiveness, incredible generosity, and abiding love, my brother has infused my life with countless blessings. And lastly, to my mother, Emily Meira Koplik, who channelled all of her affection, support, encouragement and love into daily pep rallies, which she then sent through international phone lines. Simply, I would not have finished without her. She enabled me to reach this day. Shehekiyanu.

For all of the kind souls who helped me along my way, I am truly grateful. They have enriched my days, and are a blessing to me. It is my hope that through this affection, they will feel "the sweetness of that shining light."*

* CZA S5/11616 Letter of 23 Sivan 5709 (20 June 1949) from Jewish community of Herat to the Government of Israel.

Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

This thesis tells the story of the Jews of Afghanistan - both long-term residents and refugees fleeing from the Soviet Union - between 1933 and 1952. It explores the role of the Jewish community that lived among other non-Sunni minorities in a mountainous land wedged between the Soviet Union, British India, China, and Iran. Its experience was moulded by the cataclysmic first half of the twentieth century. Within Afghanistan, the Jews faced the impact of full political independence from Britain and attempts at modernisation. Yet soon the proverbial wolf was at the door, as larger forces intervened. The foundation of the Soviet Union and Stalin's purges led to an influx of Bukharan Jewish refugees, which worsened the fragile position of the native community. Concurrently, the rise of Nazi Germany brought a new kind of anti-Semitism to Afghanistan, while in the 1940s, World War II and India's partition caused further peril. When the modern state of Israel emerged, the promises of messianic Zionism were too much to resist, and almost all of the Jewish community in Afghanistan emigrated.

General works on Afghanistan normally only provide several sentences on the Jewish community. Meanwhile, Afghanistani Jewish history is often included within the scholarship of the larger Persian or Central Asian Jewish sphere.[1] Unfortunately,

[1]Indeed, the concept of an Afghan Jew could be somewhat of a misnomer, as all members of the Pashtun ethnicity are Muslim. While living in Afghanistan, the Jewish community never called themselves Afghan. Ironically, individuals began to use the term only after leaving the country. This change is striking as it occurred not only upon arrival in Israel, and also during the journey, while waiting as close as in Iran or India. Through the action of crossing the border, the terms changed. (See Central Zionist Archives S6/6787, communal letter from 'Afghani refugees' (Teheran) to the Director of the Office of Immigration, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) 30 January 1952.) A similar process may have occurred among Hazara Shiites who fled to Iran after the Soviet invasion in 1979. In Iran, they were viewed as Afghan because they came from the country of Afghanistan, although clearly they were not Pashtun.

Despite this variation, I have chosen to use the term 'Afghanistani' because 'Afghan' is often synonymous with 'Pashtun'. As half of Afghanistan's population is non-Pashtun, 'Afghanistani' seems to be a more inclusive usage. (Though this may be changing. In a recent article, Michael Ignatieff

historians examining the Jewish experience frequently overlook vital events occurring in Muslim society, and the impact of larger social forces on the minority Jewish community. Sometimes their marginal status provided a buffer, as the Jews were never a part of Pashtun blood feuds. More frequently, however, their vulnerable position as *ahl al-dhimma* (protected, yet second class citizens) meant that they were at greater risk of violence. This work breaks new ground by placing *Mizrahi* Jewish history in a wider context, and emphasizing local and national processes in the state of Afghanistan.[2]

For the most part, the modern history of Afghanistan has been written as the history of the dominant Pashtun ethnicity. Far less emphasis is placed upon the other groups, such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, Nuristanis, Baluchis, Turkmens, and Farsiwans. In many ways, just as the Hazaras were 'pacified,'[3] their voices were also silenced.[4] This work is unusual in focusing on the experiences of a non-Muslim, non-Pashtun minority using records outside of Afghanistan. Because many Jews were literate and had international contacts, documentation about their experiences survives all over the world. They were preserved, even though much of Afghanistan's history was never recorded or crucial documents were lost in the Soviet invasion and its aftermath. The sources for this thesis come from Britain, Israel, France, Germany and the United States. The Jewish refugees described in these pages left forty years before the more recent waves of Afghanistanis fled their homeland, for Pakistan and Iran. The Jews then resettled in Israel during the 1940s and 1950s, guarding their ancient heritage in an old but also new land.

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writes: "most Afghans feel they are Afghans first and Uzbeks, Hazaras, Tajiks or Pashtuns second." "Nation-Building Lite" *New York Times Magazine,* Sunday 28 July 2002.)

Currently, a similar phenomenon is occurring in Kazakhstan where 'Kazakh' refers to the specific ethnicity, while 'Kazakhistani' may be used by any citizen of this new nation. In a small way, the use of these terms may work against the discrimination faced by non-titular communities.

[2]*Mizrahi* literally means 'eastern' in Hebrew, and refers to Jews from places like: Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and India. They are distinguished from those who originated in Eastern Europe (*Ashkenazi*) or those who lived in Spain before the Inquisition (*Sephardi*).

[3]See Hasan K. Kakar, *The Pacification of the Hazaras of Afghanistan* (New York: The Afghanistan Council, Asia Society, 1973). Note that later his name is spelled Kaker.

[4]See Sayed Askar Mousavi, *The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study.* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 5-10. While Mousavi does not say that the voices of the Hazaras were silenced, it does appear to be a core theme within his work, and surfaces directly in a discussion of Afghan nationalism.

While this thesis contributes to Afghanistani history, it is also rooted in Jewish studies. As Hannah Arendt said in 1943: "For the first time Jewish history is not separate but tied up with that of all other nations."[5] Much of the secondary literature about Judaism in the 1930s and 1940s is connected with responses to the Holocaust. Within this context, it may seem like an aside to the far larger events which occurred in the middle of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, this history reflects a distinct experience. It illuminates the difficulties a middleman minority faced after the advent of nationalist ideas, and with pressures for changing the traditional economic structure of the country. It also sheds light upon another kind of anti-Semitism, sometimes more subtle and flexible within the confines of the Muslim world, and other times just as pernicious as the imported European variety.

During the period examined, the Afghanistani Jewish community only reached approximately 5,000 individuals. It was composed of mainly merchants and traders who spoke Judeo-Persian at home.[6] Bukharan Jewish refugees in Kabul may have considered themselves worse off than the Jews of Germany in 1934,[7] but ten years later, the majority of them were still alive. While the Afghan government did not want Jews dwelling in their midst, it was not willing to embark upon genocide. Nonetheless, some governmental actions, especially those of the Minister of National Economy, 'Abd al-Majid Zabuli, can be compared with the early anti-Semitic legislation of Nazi Germany. The narrow Afghan leadership received some westernised education, and were aware of technological advances and philosophic conceptions popular in Europe. They wanted full control of the lucrative karakul skin trade that had been partially conducted within a historic Jewish economic niche.[8] This goal was achieved through

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[5]Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees" in *Menorah Journal* (January 1943): 69-77 reprinted in ed. Ron Feldman, *Hannah Arendt The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 66.

[6] Walter Fischel, "The Jews of Afghanistan," *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 March 1937, supplement 4-6.

[7]See Board of Deputies of British Jews' records at the London Metropolitan Archives: (hereafter: BoD) ACC/3121/E3/506/2 Letter from Yosef to Jewish community in England, 13 Dec 1934. (While Yosef signs his full name, it is illegible.)

[8] Jewish traders were deeply involved in the karakul trade, though precise statistics are unavailable. See chapter 5 for further details.

sometimes brutal measures. Despite large differences of perspective, geography, and culture, there is some congruence between early German and Afghan anti-Semitism in the 1930s. The experience of the Jews in Afghanistan does reflect the *zeitgeist* of the mid-twentieth century.

In addition to the specific regional and religious history, this study of Afghanistani Jewry not only fills a gap in the historiography of the region and of Jewish experience in the twentieth century, but also contributes to the study of entrepreneurial or trade minorities.[9] Explanations about the advent of trade minorities help to explain the Jewish presence in Afghanistan. In pastoral and tribal economies, peripheral groups could engage more easily in trade. Unlike the general population, trade minorities did not encounter a network of kin ties to impede their ability to loan money, charge interest, or trade with communities hostile towards each other. Ernest Gellner explains that local 'insiders' found trade minorities attractive business partners because "those who lack status can honor a contract."[10] They were able to attend to commerce without the impediment of reciprocity incumbent upon equals or kin members.[11] On a congruent note, elites found pariah groups or outsiders useful because while they might wield one kind of power, most notably economic, they did not have political or social might.[12] This kept them easily taxable, defenceless and tied to the rulers. These groups could be intimidated and milked for revenue if leaders deemed it necessary. In addition to Jews, other groups have long histories as entrepreneurial minorities, for example: Greeks, Armenians, and Zoroastrians, all of whom lived under Muslim rule.[13]

In Afghanistan, Hindus had a longer continuous history as an entrepreneurial minority than Jews did, though the two communities shared much in common. Both groups' settlements were directly related to trade, and both disrupted more normative domestic patterns to engage in commerce. Jewish men often left their families in Herat

[9] The term middlemen minorities is also used.

[10] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 104.

[11] Walter P. Zenner, *Minorities in the Middle: A Cross-Cultural Analysis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 15.

[12] While economic power was prevalent among marginalized groups, they could also wield magical power (like Roma fortune tellers) or military power (like the Mamluks or Hessians).

[13] Gellner, 102-5.

and travelled to remote caravanserais to conduct business and live in solely male communities for most of the year.[14] However, as noted, entrepreneurial minorities were not integrated into the social structure of Afghanistan. Because of their marginal status, they were unable to foster economic development. They mainly functioned as "a middle or lower economic caste with specific economic functions."[15]

Encountering Nationalist Sentiments in Afghanistan

While Afghanistan clearly met the definition of a state, its transition to a nation was far more cursory in the period examined. When nationalist currents began to appear, non-Muslim entrepreneurial minorities faced new difficulties and increasing hostility. The demise of the Jewish community is linked to the inability of including non-Muslims in an early concept of the Afghan nation. Descent from the ancient tribes of Israel features prominently in the Pashtun myth of ethnogenesis. This is particularly uncharacteristic of Muslim groups.[16] Despite this unusual connection, Jews in modern times had a far more difficult struggle to gain acceptance. As the largest, and generally most powerful ethnicity, the Pashtun image of itself impacted the entire country. The Pashtun belief in being lost children of Israel could sometimes ameliorate the condition of the modern Jewish community. While ancient Jewry was essential for the creation of the Afghan tribes, modern Jews were viewed ambivalently. For the most part Jews were marginalized in mid-twentieth century Afghanistan, and their place in society remained peripheral. When the first concepts of nationalism, particularly of economic nationalism began to appear in Afghanistan, the condition of the Jewish community became even more precarious.

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[14] Erich Brauer, "The Jews of Afghanistan: An Anthropological Report," in *Jewish Social Studies* vol. IV (1942): 123-24. See chapter two for further detail.

[15] Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 61-62.

[16] Certain American Christian religions, like the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, envision the Western hemisphere as a new Holy Land. This may partially explain some of the tolerance Jews have experienced in the United States, and certainly in Utah. While these groups practice customs linked to the Old Testament, they do not claim to be physically descended from Jews.

During the middle of the twentieth-century, Afghanistan fit into widely accepted definitions of a state, though not a nation. Invoking the work of Max Weber, Ernest Gellner defines a state as "that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence."[17] Feliks Gross offers a similar definition which basically rings true for Afghanistan: "a state is a coercive institution (organization) that has supreme power over a definite territory and its inhabitants and is vested with monopoly of the use of physical power."[18] These definitions do not account for some of the nuances of Afghanistan's political structures.

It may be fairer to describe Afghanistan in this time period as a tribal state, "based on the myth of common ethnic or racial ancestry, with rights, even privileges, granted solely to the dominant ethnic group (in practice to the governing political elite and associated political classes)."[19] Gross highlights two different types of 'tribal' states. However, this author finds it more appropriate to term the first group as neo-tribal or even pseudo-tribal. A neo-tribal society has already developed into a nation, and its most extreme versions lead to persecution, expulsion, and genocide. The state's "legitimacy is linked to ancient, but primitive, roots, brutalized by pseudoscientific theory."[20] Clearly, Gross' reference is to the Third Reich and Mussolini's Italy.

A second kind of tribal state is also described, which is found particularly in Africa. This polity is older, and resembles the structure of an extended family. It is based on a shared kinship.[21] Afghanistan's political structure belongs more to the latter type of tribal state, as it is based more upon family ties than ideology. However, this thesis will examine ways in which the Afghan state also drew upon European neo-tribal nationalist influences in its dealings with the Jewish community.

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[17] Gellner, 3.

[18] Feliks Gross, *The Civic and the Tribal State: The State, Ethnicity, and the Multiethnic State* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 8.

[19] Ibid, 12.

[20] Ibid, xi.

[21] Ibid, xii.

Like Gross, Gellner describes a similar sub-category of states. They still fit the definition of a state while unable to "monopolize legitimate violence." Gellner points out that a "feudal state does not necessarily object to private wars between its fief-holders, provided they also fulfill their obligations to their overlord."[22] In Afghanistan, the government became involved in tribal disputes when feuds began to engulf a region, or when larger crises loomed. Indeed, this was a very serious issue for the Jewish community throughout its modern history in Afghanistan. Jews could be subjected to mob violence, particularly in Herat. They often moved to Kabul, where the central government could protect them more easily.

Before examining the development of Afghan nationalism, it is important to provide a definition. This is not a simple task when considering the literature devoted to the subject. While Max Weber's description of a state is succinct and often utilized, his definition of a nation is far more vague and circular. In one article, he writes that: "a nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own." This "community of sentiment" is described as "something homogenous" which leans "towards an autonomous state."[23] Elie Kedourie views nationalism as an ideology in order "to contrast it with constitutional politics."[24] Perhaps Gellner defines nationalism more clearly as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the nation unit should be congruent." He then explains that the "nationalist principle" can be violated in several different ways. "The political boundary of a given state can fail to include all the members of the appropriate nation; or it can include them all but also include some foreigners; or it can fail in both these ways at once, not incorporating all the nationals and yet also including some non-nationals."[25] For many Pashtuns, Afghanistan must have appeared to fail in both ways.[26]

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[22] Gellner, 3-4.

[23] Max Weber, "The Nation," in ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 25.

[24] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism: Fourth, expanded edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), xiii.

[25] Gellner, 1.

[26] Even Afghanistan's leadership expressed some uncertainty that conceptions of nationality could be based upon place of birth rather than ethnicity. In an interview with a British representative, the Prime Minister, Muhammad Hashim Khan expressed a degree of confusion that he could be considered

Pockets within Afghanistani society felt the strains presented by the idea of nationalism long before the wider Sunni Muslim public was exposed to similar challenges. In the early twentieth-century, Afghanistan's international trade was limited to a few items, most importantly, karakul skins and dried fruits. Other attempts at industrialization, such as the construction of factories and mass education were limited. Despite this, anti-Semitic actions often associated with a later stage of economic development are present paradoxically in an overwhelmingly agricultural and nomadic society grappling with the challenges presented by the initial stages of development. This may be explained through the behavior of elites who are often the first or only group to show hostility towards entrepreneurial minorities.[27]

In Afghanistan, the types of anti-Semitism demonstrated by the leaders and the populace were very different. Elites, especially those within the Ministry of National Economy, displayed hostility similar to that described in Gross' 'neo-tribal' society. However, the general population's treatment of the Jewish community was more common to that found in early modern Muslim societies. It also varied according to the practices of the majority. In Herat, the hostility the Jewish community faced was similar, though for the most part less severe than that found in Qajar Iran.

As previously noted, there is a regulated place for entrepreneurial minorities as outsiders in a traditional society. They are able to wield power in a particular area only because they are impotent in other fields. However, as the patterns of societal relationships change, the status of trade minorities also shifts, and it becomes evident just how fragile their situation is. When the Afghan economy started to pursue development strategies, it became less viable for one ethnic group to control a particular trade. Full members of society were now trusted to fill a role previously

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Indian based upon where his mother gave birth. (India Office and Library [hereafter: IOL] L/PS/12/1789, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to H. Weightman (New Delhi), 17 September 1943.)

[27] For a description of the way elites can create a defensive nationalism among the populace, see Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity" in ed. John A. Hall, *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 209-11. See also Zenner, 13.

considered too dangerous for them. The need for entrepreneurial minorities lessened as 'insiders' found the outsiders' economic activity desirable and lucrative. This happened in Afghanistan even without the arrival of a "mobile, anonymous, centralized mass society" as Gellner describes.[28] Rather when the first rays of the concept of development appeared, Pashtun leaders became aware of the potential to generate wealth for themselves and hard currency for the national treasury through the karakul trade. If they were able to achieve this and get rid of an undesired, non-Islamic group, then so much the better. The term nationalism is seldom described in the archival literature examined. Remarkably, it is present in a discussion about the economic motives of the Afghan government, and its effects on the Jewish community. The British Minister to Afghanistan, Richard Maconachie notes that within the economy "the nationalist idea ... finds expression in the theory that profits from Afghan trade should go into Afghan pockets."[29] When this was combined with the suspicions that Bukharan Jewish refugees were actually Soviet agents, the way was paved for an internal refugee crisis, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the community.

While the literature on nationalism in general fails to apply to the larger political currents present in Afghanistan in the 1930s and 1940s, it is striking to note that Gellner's description of Diaspora nationalism fits well into an examination of the Jewish community at this time. This demonstrates that the processes of emerging nationalism in Afghanistan are more multi-faceted than they may appear initially. Gellner writes that "disastrous and tragic consequences" occur in modern times to groups who combine "economic superiority and cultural identifiability with political and military weakness." In the worst cases, genocide occurs, but also the gamut runs towards expulsion, or even a tenuous truce. As the "age of specialized communities" begins to fade, the government faces a very different set of pressures which leads to new decisions, generally far less protective of minorities. Gellner writes that the government becomes interested in taking away the trade minority's lucrative niche, and

[28] Gellner, 103.

[29] IOL R/12/19, Memorandum respecting the Commercial Policy of the Afghan Government 1930-34, sent by Machonachie (Kabul) to the Department of Overseas Trade (London) 15 June 1934, 8-10.

due to this group's "visibility, and wealth, it can buy off a great deal of discontent in the wider population by dispossessing and persecuting it; and so the inevitable happens."[30] The demise of the Jewish community in Afghanistan is directly linked to these forces.

Once nationalism appears on the horizon, and processes of modern development begin, the condition of a very small, easily distinguishable, specialized group is endangered. The following work traces this process within Afghanistan in painstaking detail. It reconstructs the history of a people who are no longer resident, and shows the rich congruities between the political and economic history of Afghanistan and one of its smallest minorities. Despite a wealth of primary sources, the Jewish history in Afghanistan during the first half of the twentieth century has only been partially explored. Perhaps this is because it describes the history of a marginalized group of people that included both long-term residents and refugees.[31]

Contemporaneous Secondary Literature

The secondary literature on the Jews of Afghanistan is limited. While many short, introductory pieces written by journalists, travellers or members of the community in Israel are available, very few detailed articles or books have been published.[32] This section will examine these important scholarly works thoroughly. Other sources of congruent information, such as the history of the Mashhadi community and the economy of the region will also be viewed to shed light upon this community. Due to the small size of this group and its frequent isolation, inaccurate information is often presented. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Western sources grossly overestimated the population of the Jews in Afghanistan, with a number of 40,000 commonly cited.[33] This work seeks to clarify these common errors

[30] Gellner, 105-7.

[31] With special thanks to Ali Ahsani for guiding me through the literature of nationalism theories.

[32] This author often found snippets of information in unlikely places. For example, two travel accounts published in 1937 mention the Jews' expulsion from northern Afghanistan, and their loss of business in the karakul trade. See Rosita Forbes, *Forbidden Road – Kabul to Samarkand* (London: Cassell, 1937), 59; and Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (London: Macmillian, 1937), 119, 237, 294-5.

[33] *Jewish Encyclopedia* (London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1925) s.v. "Afghanistan;" and "The Jews of Afghanistan" in *Jewish Chronicle,* 3 February 1950, 13. Both of these sources exaggerate Afghanistan's

by drawing upon a diverse range of materials. For example, while the information found in western Jewish encyclopaedias was inaccurate, a Russian version published in St. Petersburg before the October Revolution provides far more precise information about the Jewish population in Afghanistan and throughout Central Asia. It estimates that approximately 2,000 Jews lived in Afghanistan, 1,000 in Khiva, 9,000 in Bukhara and 8,300 in the Ferghana Oblast.[34]

Until 1998, when the Israel Museum in Jerusalem presented an exhibition on the Jews of Afghanistan (with an accompanying text), the most detailed work in English published on the daily life of the Jews of Afghanistan was an anthropological study by Erich Brauer written in 1942. The few academics like Vartan Gregorian, who examine the Jewish community as a part of a larger discussion about Afghanistan, often cite Brauer. For half a century his work was unrivalled. While other dedicated authors contributed articles and even a few books in the intervening years, for the most part, their work was not of as high a quality. Brauer is unusual as he was a professionally trained anthropologist who conducted original research and included theoretical rationale in his work.

Erich Brauer (1895-1942) was a German anthropologist who arrived in Jerusalem in 1925. He was a research fellow at Hebrew University and a pioneer in the field of Jewish ethnology. Brauer spent six years studying new immigrants from Yemen in Jerusalem, and published the first ethnological monograph on a Jewish community, entitled *Ethnologie der jemenitischen Juden.* In 1931 he returned to Germany, but due to the rise of the Third Reich, he set out again for Jerusalem in 1934. Brauer spent the

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Jewish population by a factor of ten. See Itzhak Bezalel, "*'Edah bfnai 'Etzmah*" in *Pe'amim* 79 (Spring 1999): 16 for a discussion of Afghanistan's Jewish population, accurate and otherwise. Inaccuracies may have occurred because these sources relied upon a traveller who never visited Afghanistan. (See Erich Brauer, *The Jews of Kurdistan.* Edited by Raphael Patai [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993], 38.) He concludes that Benjamin of Tudela never actually visited Amadiya in the twelfth century because of his over-estimation of the Jewish community's population. A similar situation may have occurred in the late nineteenth-century in Afghanistan.)

[34]*Evreiskaya Enziklopediya* (St Petersburg, n.d., c.1907-1917), s.v. "Aziya," by G. Krasnii and Israel Levy. The edition at the Central Zionist Archives was from the personal collection of Nahum Sokolow, president of the World Zionist Congress (1931-1936), and prolific author.

rest of his life in Palestine and died from ill health in 1942.[35] He was a staunch member of the *Kulturkreislehre* or a school of thought known as the Culture-Circle Theory. Raphael Patai describes this as a theory which holds that "component parts or traits of cultures have an innate coherence and travel in closed 'circles.'" When these circles (or perhaps a better English translation conceives them as spheres) interact with other ones, they clash, and this leads to an amalgamation of the two, or a domination of one over the other. Despite being a strong proponent of *Kulturekreislehre*, Patai reports that Brauer sought to present only facts. Due to his "scientific integrity ... he excluded every theoretical discussion most conscientiously."[36] In addition to his work on Yemeni Jews, Brauer almost completed a book on Kurdish Jews, which Patai translated into Hebrew in 1946, and presented in its original English in 1993.

All of Brauer's work on the Jews of Afghanistan was published posthumously. An article in *Jewish Social Studies* was published a few months after his death. Brauer wrote in German or in English, though a Hebrew version of his article in *Jewish Social Studies* was published in 1944 by the journal *Sinai*.[37] Brauer was the first author to stress how many communal aspects were profoundly unusual, and his insight and detail were unrivalled. As is true of the field of Jewish ethnography in general, as well as the specific study of Yemeni and Kurdish communities, Brauer's work comprises the basis of study in the field of Afghanistani Jewry.

While most of Brauer's article in *Sinai* is a direct translation from the original article published in *Jewish Social Studies*, there are important differences. These provide one of the very few windows into the historiography of this community. The English article from 1942 is mostly descriptive, and corresponds closely to Patai's appraisal of Brauer's work. It refrains from heavy indictments against the community for matters as trivial as their alleged lack of zeal for horticultural pursuits. Yet, when the Hebrew piece shifts away from the English one, puzzling statements appear.

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[35] Brauer 1993, 23-4.

[36] Ibid, 26-7.

[37] Erich Brauer, "The Jews of Afghanistan, An Anthropological Report," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (1942): 121-138; and "Yehudei Afghanistan," *Sinai* 4:12 (1944): 324-342.

It is this author's opinion that the most controversial sections of the Hebrew article were not written by Brauer. Most notably, the article was published two years after his death, in a language Brauer may not have been fully comfortable writing. Indeed, in a lengthy work on Kurdish Jews, Brauer does not engage in moralizing statements, even when they may be justified. When describing domestic violence among Kurdish Jews, he manages to maintain an almost neutral tone towards a practice many deem repulsive. He writes that they: "have a tendency to be brutal to their wives and to beat them – often so cruelly that the women must take to their beds." He describes that at wedding feasts, the women who bring their husbands food later than other wives "are beaten by their husbands in the presence of the other men. The husband wishes thereby to display his might before the other men." With this line, the section entitled: Treatment of Women ends.[38] One feels certain that Brauer would not have lashed out against Afghanistani Jews for as slight a matter as the subjects of their folksongs or the size of their gardens. This unknown editor has a very different perspective from Brauer. It is crucial to differentiate between these two articles as the additions of the *Sinai* piece undermine this anthropologist's clearly original work.

Despite the editorial mystery, the *Sinai* article does provide valuable insight into the shifting Jewish academic perspectives that occurred during the 1940s. Afghanistani Jews are presented according to their 'physiometric-racial' grouping, yet anti-Semitic rhetoric is transformed in an effort to show how Jewish physical characteristics are handsome and positive. Later the article charges the Jews of Afghanistan with not retroactively embracing secular Zionist ideals. This editor's outlook was shaped by his (or her) political and emotional attachment to modern Zionism. A moral value was assigned for cultural practices and living patterns Brauer documented.

In contrast to the English article, the study in *Sinai* also attempts to explain the racial origin of the Jewish people, and then specifically Afghanistani Jewry. It notes that there was a fusion between the Eastern and Armenian races which created the

[38] Brauer 1993, 179-80.

Jewish race, and that the Jews from Afghanistan (like other Mizrahi communities) are part of the ancient proto-Semitic racial group. This group existed before the destruction of the Second Temple, whereas Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities belong to a more recent racial type.[39] The article published in *Sinai* appears to have a much stronger stamp of anthropological opinions current in the early twentieth century. However, when going through a detailed examination of the physionomy of Afghanistani Jews, it does not conclude that they are racially inferior. Rather the article notes that Brauer's primary informant, Hacham Abraham Shabbetai, was as tall as a European or American at 1.73 m, and that his body had a "statuesque quality."[40] Despite the incipient currents of anti-Semitism found in the contemporary literature, with the *Sinai* article it is transformed to become somewhat positive.[41]

Immediately after the discussion on race, the *Sinai* article weighs the Afghanistani Jews on the scale of secular Zionism. They are condemned as "completely urban in the worst sense of the term." It continues by saying: "They have no connection to the land or to the earth, and lack any sign of a spiritual connection to nature. They are like cave-dwellers who never see the sun." Their lack of folk songs or lullabies about nature or the weather is lamented, and the article chides the Jews of Afghanistan by saying that Kurdish and even Yemenite Jews possess these kinds of songs. (Although Yemenis sing more about the Land of Israel than the earth of Yemen.) Further, the article notes that Afghanistan supports a significant nomadic economy while *none* of its Jewish population is nomadic.[42]

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[39] Brauer 1944, 325.

[40] English phrase used. Brauer 1944, 325.

[41] A far more extreme example is found in an article entitled "Jews and Eugenics" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 16 April 1915, 16). It states that Jewish children in England are healthier than non-Jewish children even in poor families, because the Jewish mother is "innately superior" due to "long ages of stringent parental selection." Then the article shifts to partially refute eugenics while still embracing aspects of this theory. Quoting the obstetrician C.W. Saleeby, the article argues that "the chief 'racial poisons,' ... are: alcohol, venereal disease, and to some extent lead. The slums directly conduce [sic] to alcoholism and sexual immorality, and thus to racial poisoning and destruction. The pseudo-Darwinian theory of the immune race is disproved, except in the single instance of the Jews who prove my general contention, for they have always protected their race from alcoholism and venereal disease." This clearly shows that while some of the arguments surrounding eugenics in the early twentieth century were embraced, the Jewish community still sought to shift the conclusions from negative to positive.

[42] Brauer 1944, 326.

After these two critiques, the rest of the *Sinai* article's tone softens, and it basically resembles the piece found in *Jewish Social Studies*. It explains why the Jewish community did not engage in agriculture, as it was small and vulnerable to attack, the countryside was far from secure, and as *'ahl al-dhimma* they had an additional tax burden.[43] The last page of the Hebrew article finds room to pardon the Afghanistanis for their lack of contact with nature, as they do have "various rain-making ceremonies."[44] This article also has a harsh note for the rulers of Afghanistan. It accuses them of fascism and self-enrichment, making extremist decisions leading to the destruction of the Jewish community.[45]

Most outside writers of this era mention Afghanistani Jewry as an aside to a longer discussion on the whereabouts of the ten lost tribes of Israel.[46] To his credit, Brauer only tangentially mentions the theory that the Pashtuns are a lost tribe, and then quickly dismisses it. The discrepancies in these two articles offer insight into the currents that shaped the thinking about Afghanistani Jewry when it was first studied. Clearly, our mystery editor was not as forward thinking as Brauer. His (or her) dismay at trivial matters like the lack of songs about nature seems out of place, though Zionist mores at the end of the Yishuv period are visibly demonstrated through this commentary.[47] On the other hand, Brauer was a careful researcher whose observations are confirmed by many other sources. He was a pioneering academic in Judaic studies who continues to make a significant contribution to the field.

One contemporary of Brauer was Walter J. Fischel, a professor at Hebrew University. He conducted early studies on the Jews of Central Asia and Iran, and the

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[43] Brauer 1942, 126.

[44] Ibid, 138.

[45] Brauer 1944, 331.

[46] For example, when Yitzhak Ben-Zvi interviews a Bukharan Jew who just arrived from Pakistan, he also adds an extra page about the alleged Jewish descent among the Pashtun – that the Afridi are actually the lost tribe of Ephraim, etc. CZA S6/4577, notes on Ben-Zvi's interview with Mr. Borukhov about the state of the Jewish communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 15-16 January 1948.

[47] See: "From Betrothal to Marriage" in ed. No'am Bar'am-BenYossef, *Brides and Betrothals: Jewish Wedding Rituals in Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1998): 43-54. With special thanks to Tamara Kawam for this gift.

two men travelled together.[48] They reported their findings to the Alliance Israëlite Universelle and the Jewish Agency in Palestine.[49] Fischel helped to explain the significance of events during the 1930s and 1940s to the British Jewish public. His articles in *The Jewish Chronicle* provide solid historical information. However, Fischel's primary interests were in medieval history, as well as the Jewish communities of Iran and India. His articles on Afghanistan do not often cross the threshold between description and analysis.[50]

Other contemporary sources include Abraham Emanuelson, who published a booklet entitled *The Remnant of the Jews*.[51] Emanuelson was from Afghanistan, though he represented Bukharan Jewry at the Nineteenth World Zionist Congress.[52] Itzhak Bezalel remarked that before the Russian Revolution, many Jews from Afghanistan would claim to be Bukharan as it was more prestigious. In Palestine, after Bukharans became impoverished, Jews from Afghanistan began to refer to themselves

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[48]Some of his publications include: "The Jews of Central Asia (Khorasan) in Medieval Hebrew and Islamic Literature" reprinted for private circulation from *Historia Judaica* 7:1 (April 1945); "The Leaders of the Jews of Bokhara," L. Jung, *Jewish Leaders (1750-1940)* (Jerusalem: 1964); "The Jews in Mediaeval Iran from the 16th to the 18th centuries: Political, Economic, and Communal aspects," ed. Shaul Shaked, *Irano-Judaica I* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1982): 265-291; "The Jews of Persia, 1795-1940" *Jewish Social Studies* XII (1950): 119-160; "Khurasan" and "Judeo-Persian Literature" s.v. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

[49] See Alliance Israëlite Universelle [hereafter: AIU] microfilm roll 3, Iran (Hamadan) I C 2, letter from Cohen (Hamadan) to AIU (Paris), 11 February 1931 regarding Fischel's activities.

[50]Fischel also appears in the Board of Deputies' archives, when he asks for funding for a proposed research trip to Iran and Afghanistan. Just like Emanuelson, he was unceremoniously rejected. See BoD, ACC/3121/E3/506/1, letter from Walter Fischel of Hebrew University, Jerusalem, to N. Laski, president of the Board of Deputies, 16 January 1934; and also file ACC/3121/B4/FI/11 entitled: "Correspondence with Dr. Fischel about his report on the Jews of Persia," 1931. Fischel is just one of the contemporary scholars to appear in the Board of Deputies' archives.

After World War II, the leadership of the Board of Deputies changed to include newer immigrants from Eastern Europe who embraced Zionism like Selig Brodetsky, and worked to sweep away intra-Jewish prejudice. The destruction of European Jewry meant that the plight of Mizrahi communities was taken far more seriously. The Board worked strenously to assist Jews overseas. Bernard Lewis, (reported as being: "Head of Department of M.E. History, School of Oriental Studies") advised the Board on how help Mizrahi communities who were facing increasing hostility in the Muslim world as the Zionist dream came to fruition. See: BoD, ACC/3121/C11/13/31, "Jews in Oriental Countries: Suggestions by Dr. B. Lewis," 5-6.

[51] Abraham Emanuelson, *The Remnant of the Jews* (New York: privately published, 1929).

[52] Emanuelson (who changed his name to Emanueli when emigrating to Palestine) represented Bukharan Jewry at the World Zionist Congress in Lucerne during August 1935. See BoD, ACC/3121/E3/506/2, and author's interview with Ben-Zion Yehoshua, Jerusalem, 15 July 2001.

a separate group.[53] These distinctions do not seem to have hindered Emanuelson, who embraced Bukharans, Afghanistanis and even Ashkenazim as his own. In Emanuelson's 1929 work, he stresses the importance of gathering the Jews of Asia and Africa in Eretz Yisrael "to start building the Third Temple."[54] There is a religious, national, and humanitarian duty to help Mizrahi Jewry.

> Our attitude towards our co-religionists in Asiatic, African, and Eastern European countries must be the attitude of a father toward his illiterate children. He must educate and help them all and not make any favorites among them. This is his duty and he cannot avoid it.[55]

Emanuelson presents an interesting twist to the idea of white man's burden. In his interactions with the Board of Deputies in the 1930s, he comes across as being far more empathetic to the plight of the Jewish refugees and settled Jewish community in Afghanistan than many others, as one might expect considering his background.[56]

Comparisons with Mashhadi Jewish Experience

The literature surrounding the experiences of the Jews of Mashhad is considerably larger than that for Afghanistani Jewry.[57] The present author has relied upon a 1992 literature review of works in Russian by M.S. Kupovetsky. Kupovetsky says that the historiography of the Jews of Iran and Afghanistan before they migrated to Central Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is fragmentary.[58] However, several relevant works have been recently published in English. These include Raphael Patai's *Jadid al-Islam: The Jewish "New Muslims" of Meshhed*, and a privately published work

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[53] Interview with Itzhak Bezalel, 4 July 2001, Jerusalem, see also his "*'Edah b'fnai 'Atsmah*" in *Pe'amim* 79 (spring 1999): 15-40.

[54] Emanuelson, 19.

[55] Ibid, 24-5.

[56] See BoD files: ACC/3121/B4/EM/3 and ACC/3121/C12/4 Abraham Emanueli (Binyamina) to Sir Herbert Samuel (London), 28 January 1935.

[57] See for example: Re'uven Kashani, *Anusei Mashad* (Jerusalem: Va'ad Adat ha Sefardim, 1979) and Amnon Netzer, "*Korot Anusei Mashad l'fi Ya'akov Dilmaniyan*" (The History of the Forced Converts of Mashad according to Ya'akov Daylamgan) in *Pe'amim* 42 (winter 1990): 127-156.

[58] M.S. Kupovetsky, "*Evreii iz Mesheda i Gerata v Srednei Azii*" in *Ethnograficheskoe Obozreniye* 5 (September/October 1992): 55.

by Azaria Levy.[59] Levy's section on the expulsion of Jews from Herat is of particular importance to the present work, as he shows there was a historical precedent for the Jewish expulsion within Afghanistan, and describes the effects of war on this beleaguered minority.

Patai's *Jadid al-Islam* is a popular history of the Jews of Mashhad from their settlement in the 1740s to their emigration and dispersion over two hundred years later. He mentions Afghanistan, but only in so far as it pertains directly to Mashhadi experience. More helpful is a chapter where original ethnographic research on the Mashadi community in Jerusalem is presented. Patai offers a translation of memoirs written by Farajullah Nasrullayoff Livian in 1944.[60] Perhaps the most important aspect of this section is an account of Jewish business practices in the region. Through Livian's descriptions, both oral and written, one gains an understanding of ethnic identity and markers for a people who were tightly bound, yet spatially diffuse. This account supplements knowledge about the Jewish experience in Afghanistan, as most of Afghanistan's modern Jewish community fled Mashhad in the middle of the nineteenth century. However, they retained a similar dialect of Juedo-Persian, cooking styles, religious rituals, and business practices.

Israeli Secondary Sources

Apart from those already mentioned, almost all secondary sources about the Jews of Afghanistan have been written in Hebrew. While two works are published in English, *Afghanistan: The Synagogue and the Jewish Home* and *Brides and Betrothals: Jewish Wedding Rituals in Afghanistan* both are translations from Hebrew and concentrate on religious and cultural practices.[61] Only one chapter in each book is devoted to the history of the community. Ben-Zion Yehoshua-Raz's *MiNidhei Yisrael*

[59]Raphael Patai, *Jadid al-Islam: The Jewish "New Muslims" of Meshhed* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997) and Azaria Levy, *The Jews of Mashad* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1998)

[60]Patai, 112.

[61] Zohar Hanegbi and Bracha Yaniv, *Afghanistan: The Synagogue and the Jewish Home* (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University, 1991); and ed. No'am Bar 'am-BenYossef, *Brides and Betrothals: Jewish Wedding Rituals in Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1998).

b'Afghanistan l'Anusei Mashhad b'Iran is the most comprehensive historical work, spanning a thousand years, 500 pages, and including a forty-page bibliography. It is by far the field's most comprehensive work.[62] Some of Yehoshua's chapters were published first as journal articles. Unfortunately, this text must be used with caution. Many primary sources are reprinted verbatim, without sufficient analysis. Some of Yehoshua's conclusions are not grounded in his source material, and other claims are problematic.[63] Nonetheless, his work makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of the Jews of Afghanistan, and is used throughout this thesis, where supported by original archival material.

No'am Bar 'am-Ben Yossef is a curator of Jewish ethnography at the Israel Museum, and *Brides and Betrothals* was published as an accompaniment to the 1998 to 1999 exhibition on wedding customs in Afghanistan. It focused on material culture, and traditional rituals, many of which are no longer observed in Israel. Accompanying the exhibition, the journal *Pe'amim* (which is devoted to researching *Mizrahi* communities) produced an issue about the Jews of Afghanistan, Bukhara, and Iran.[64] Many articles in it were based on lectures given at the museum during the exhibition. Itzhak Bezalel's article is of particular importance as it describes identity formation among the Afghanistani community, especially after their arrival in *Eretz Yisrael.*[65]

Reuven Kashani published many small articles between the late 1950s to the mid 1980s. He generally provides basic information about the community, its immigration to Israel, or holiday celebrations. Some of his works reached an English speaking audience through the *Jewish Chronicle*, though most were published in Israel,

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[62] Ben-Zion Yehoshua-Raz, *MiNidhei Yisrael b'Afghanistan l'Anusei Mashhad b'Iran* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1992). In all other works, the author goes by Yehoshua alone, though for his opus, he chose to invoke the family's original surname of Raz. It had been changed when his uncle, Yaakov Raz committed suicide by bleeding to death in a hospital to avoid interrogation by the British after placing a bomb in an Arab market. In this way, the family sought to avoid collective punishment. Interview with author on 15 July 2001 in Jerusalem. Ben-Zion Yehoshua also published a book of his father's folktales from Herat, called: *Tapuah me-'etz ha-da'at: hamishim sipurei 'am mi-'Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: Zur-Ot, 1986).

[63] See chapter 6, section entitled "Anti-Semitism and the Influence of Nazi Ideology" for full details.

[64] *Pe'amim* 79 (spring 1999).

[65] Itzhak Bezalel, "*'Edah b'fnai 'Etsmah*" in *Pe'amim* 79 (spring 1999): 15-40.

especially in the journals *Mahanaim*, *Shevet Va'am*, and *Ba-Ma'arakhah*. He also published a book entitled simply *Yehudei Afghanistan* (The Jews of Afghanistan) in 1975. The information provided on nineteenth century history and male settlements in northern Afghanistan is particularly useful, and confirms Brauer's research. Zebulon Kort wrote two books on folklore, and numerous articles that examine various holiday rituals.[66] His greatest contribution to the field is the preservation of a large number of audio recordings of folktales recounted in Israel. Another individual, Yisrael Mishael provides an autobiographical account of the process of immigration.[67] This work does not examine folklore in any detail, and spends a limited amount of time on the community's settlement in Israel. Consequently, neither book is studied in detail.

Kashani, like others in the field, including Ze'ev Gul and Azaria Levy, resorted to printing his own manuscript, as he was unable to find a commercial publisher.[68] Apparently, the history of the Jews of Afghanistan is only of limited interest to the Israeli public. Perhaps this is because all the descendents of Afghanistani Jews could barely fill a small town. Most of the Israeli authors study their own roots and ethnic community. Indeed, very few outsiders have researched them, and this handful have all been Jewish. Some authors spent a portion of their lives in Afghanistan, while others were born in Israel to parents from Afghanistan. Almost all share family and communal connections. The tone of their interactions can be compared to the way members of an extended family behave – full of love, respect, jealousy, and even petty intrigue.

Historiographical Trends

As Guy Matalon states: "Most of the literature about the Jews of Afghanistan and Iran is inaccessible to most of the scholars who concentrate on this geographical

[66] Zebulon Kort, *'Sipurai-'Am m'pi Yehudei Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: D'vir, 1983) and *Bat Ha-Melech she-Hafechah l'Zer Prahim* (Tel Aviv, 1974).

[67] Yisrael Mishael, *Bein Afghanistan l'Eretz-Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Va'ad Edat ha-Sefardim, 1981).

[68] Reuven Kashani, *Yehudei Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1975); Ze'ev Gul, *Kehilat Herat: 1839-1976* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1984); and Azaria Levy, *The Jews of Mashad* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1998).

area."[69] All pivotal sources are published in Hebrew. Recently, key works have begun to be translated into English, though they are not obtained easily outside of Israel. Perhaps because of this difficulty, or because of disinterest, scholars of the mainstream history of Afghanistan mention the Jews only in passing, and without bothering to check their facts. One such example is the work of Louis Dupree, a prominent scholar of Afghanistan. His short extracts on the Jewish community are riddled with errors. In 1980 he wrote:

> Small Jewish (*Yahudi*) business communities with active synagogues exist in Kabul, Herat, and Qandahar. Many Jews initially emigrated [sic] to Israel, but most returned because of the discrimination they and other Sephardic and oriental Jews suffered under the dominant European Ashkenazim. Many have since emigrated to the U.S.A.[70]

This passage is inaccurate. The centre of Jewish life in Afghanistan was Herat, though by the 1930s, Kabul gained increasing importance, often through duress. Very few Jews lived in Kandahar. Almost all of the community immigrated permanently to Israel. If a handful returned to Afghanistan, they left again after the Soviet invasion in 1979. There is a small community of Afghanistani Jews in New York, with two synagogues. The reasons they left Israel arguably have more to do with business opportunities. While intra-Jewish prejudice is a problem in Israel, perhaps twice as many Ashkenazim live in the United States. Mizrahim comprise a tiny fraction of the American Jewish population. Generally, *yerida* (emigration from Israel) affects thirty per cent of any wave of immigration. The numbers for Afghanistani Jews were far lower.[71]

Five years after publishing the above book, Dupree wrote an article on the ethnography of Afghanistan. He stated that the language of the Jewish community was

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[69] Guy Matalon, "The 'Other' in 'Afghan' Identity: Medieval Jewish community of Afghanistan" found on www.afghan-web.com/history/articles/jews.html in November 2001. It was originally published in *Mardom Nama-e Bakhter*, eds. Latif Tabibi and Daud Saba. Matalon continues that most of the material written on Jewish history is "saturated with folklore and little concrete, archeological evidence."

[70] Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 111.

[71] Bezalel in Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 31; and Yehoshua 1992, 306, 324.

Hebrew, though "all speak Dari or Pashto or both." He reported that they were "merchants or moneylenders" and that their "physical type is Mediterranean."[72] Once again, while some accurate information is presented, every sentence contains misinformation. Linguistically, Jews from Afghanistan speak a form of Judeo-Persian, which resembles that of the former hidden community in Mashhad. Judeo-Persian is like other diasporic Jewish languages in that it is written in a Hebrew script but its structure more closely resembles the language spoken by the region's non-Jews (much like Yiddish, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic). Outside of the home, men spoke many languages including Dari and Pashtu to facilitate business transactions, though they also spoke English, Russian, and Hebrew when necessary. While the Jewish community was predominantly composed of merchants and traders, most had been ousted from moneylending by stiff Hindu competition. However, in the 1950s, there were three or four Jewish foreign exchange dealers in Kabul's money bazaar. One, Ibrahim Aranov immigrated to the United States in 1963, and Dupree may have known of this man. Aranov's experiences were not typical of the community.[73] As for 'physical type,' this is open to debate, and there has been no anthropological work that studies Jews alongside other minorities of Afghanistan in any depth.

Another troubling work is Hasan Kaker's *Government and Society in Afghanistan* published in 1979. While writing about the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman Khan, his description of the Jewish community directly repeats the views current in the India Office records of the 1930s and 1940s. The author does not view these sources critically, though they recapitulate British intelligence reports regarding official Afghan attitudes.[74] Kaker closely follows the opinions of his sources with very little reflection into their weaknesses. He repeats the prejudices of one time when explaining more

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[72] Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), s.v. "Afghanistan IV. Ethnography," by Louis Dupree. Dupree characterizes the Sikh community in similar terms, noting that: "their basic physical type is Mediterranean, with extreme hirsuteness."

[73] Maxwell Fry, *The Afghan Economy: Money, Finance, and the Critical Constraints to Economic Development* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 236.

[74] See Hasan K. Kaker, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan* (Austin: University of Texas, 1979), 149 and 282 notes 15 and 16. Kaker takes his information about Jews in the 1880s and 1890s directly from this source: Note on the Jews of Afghanistan, Squire (Kabul) to Eden (London), 29 December 1944, in IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll 3/93, 45.

distant events. In his discussion of 'Abd al-Rahman's rule, he brings in material from a discussion of Soviet espionage at the India Office during the 1940s.[75] Kaker's work is often cited by others in the secondary literature, though recently some scholars have become more cautious about his tendency to repeat older views.[76]

One of the exceptions to this trend of misinformation is Vartan Gregorian's *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* published in 1969. Gregorian is the only author I have encountered who weaves the history of the Jewish community into a larger work about Afghanistan. He reviews the history of the Jews in a section about cosmopolitan minorities, comparing their experiences to the Hindu and Armenian communities. By placing them in the context of urban trading minorities, a great deal of insight is gained about their function in a traditional economy.[77] Gregorian offers a rare bibliography on the Jews of Afghanistan in English.[78] He also states that the ancient Jewish community was constantly receiving waves of immigrants from Bukhara, Persia, and Georgia, and that they maintained contact with Russia and Europe through " their sister communities in Khiva, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Samarkand."[79] However, Gregorian discards news reports and intelligence information about Jews in Afghanistan received in the 1930s, as he was unable to verify this information through the archives. He published his study several decades before Western records fully opened.[80] Gregorian provides the best example of a work which includes non-Islamic groups within a general history of Afghanistan. However, he still leaves room for further analysis, as his work is more a general survey and some twentieth century archival sources were unavailable to him.

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[75] Kaker ascribes the expulsion of the Jews from northern Afghanistan to the presence of Soviet agents, just as British officials did. In many ways, Kaker is not particularly socially liberal. He claims that one of the reasons (along with the lack of cultivable land) that the Tajiks of Badakhshan were poor was because of their 'conspicuous' practice of homosexuality, which led to smaller sized families. (185) His source for this piece of highly suspect demographic analysis comes from Charles E. Yate, *Northern Afghanistan* (London: William Blackwood, 1888).

[76] See Richard Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 34-35. However, when discussing the subjugation of the Hazaras, Mousavi writes: "Kakar's view bears a close resemblance to the very words used by Abdur Rahman himself." (116-17).

[77] Gregorian, 61.

[78] It even rivals some bibliographies published in Israel. *Demography and Statistics of Diaspora Jewry 1920 - 1970* Bibliography vol.1 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1976); and Shlomo Deshen *Yehudim b'Mizrah: Bibliografyah Sotziyologit Nivheret* (Tel Aviv: University Institute for Social Research, 1978).

[79] Gregorian, 63-4.

[80] Ibid, 346.

As this thesis seeks to link the Jewish experience to the larger history of Afghanistan, general secondary sources were used, sometimes intensively, as a way of providing sufficient contextualisation. The literature on Afghanistan is quite substantial, and peaks with each new conflict or war. However, careful political histories based on archival materials are far more rare. This work relies on a small number of rigorous studies. Jonathan Lee presents a revised picture of 'Abd al-Rahman's rule (1880-1901) which examines the roots of later inter-ethnic strife.[81] Senzil Nawid looks at the reforms of Amanullah from the perspective of the ulama.[82] Robert McChesney presents a Hazara scribe's account of the reign of Habibullah Kalakani in 1929.[83] The most eminent historian of Afghanistan currently working in English is Ludwig Adamec. His books are a pivotal source in understanding the political history of Afghanistan during the first half of the twentieth century.[84] While Milan Hauner examines Indian politics during World War II, his use of German archives helps to paint a far clearer portrait of Hitler's goals in the region.[85] Used in conjunction with *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, his work helps to illuminate the extent of Nazi activity in Afghanistan during the war years.

The Jewish community was predominantly involved in commercial activities. Consequently, the economic climate in the 1930s and 1940s will be presented in some detail, by drawing heavily upon archival sources, particularly the India Office. However, there is a small secondary literature about Afghanistan's economy, found mainly amongst journal articles written in the late 1940s and 1950s. These works are

[81] J.L. Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan, and the Battle for Balkh, 1731-1901* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

[82] Senzil K. Nawid, *Religious Response to Social Change in Afghanistan 1919-1929: King Aman-Allah and the Afghan Ulama* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1999).

[83] Robert McChesney, *Kabul Under Siege: Fayz Muhammad's Account of the 1929 Uprising* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1999).

[84] Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1974) and *Afghanistan, 1900-1923: A Diplomatic History* (Berkeley: University of California, 1967). A bibliography charting Afghanistan's political history says simply: "The 1921-47 gap has been filled by the ambitious work of L.W. Adamec." Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopaedia Iranica.* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), s.v. "Afghanistan X. Political History," by D. Balland.

[85] Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981).

more complete than modern sources as the authors had access to Afghan governmental records which were later destroyed. They include Peter Franck's work, and an article by a former employee of the Afghan National Bank, Vladimir Cervin.[86] This is supplemented by Maxwell Fry's book, which sketches developments in the 1930s and 1940s as a way of introducing the processes of development in the 1950s and 1960s.[87] These works are helpful because they supplement archival records, and enlarge a picture often encumbered by details. Once again, Gregorian's book presents important, basic information. Unlike most authors, he devotes sections to Afghan economic policy, and its sociological consequences during all of the time periods examined. (Less emphasis is placed on political causation during the time period, though as noted, Gregorian was writing without the benefit of a fully open archival record.) This study explores the political causes and societal costs of economic policies, especially monopolisation. It is original in its detailed examination of the economic history of the Jews of Afghanistan.

Archival Sources

Communal Jewish archives may not be as strictly organised as government repositories, and the cultural dimensions and peculiarities of Jewish archives restrict the availability of documents. However, the religious injunction against the disposal of paper with the name of G-d written upon it has many interrelated effects. It became difficult to throw away any important piece of paper, and often, large numbers of documents were preserved in this manner. Perhaps the best-known result of this was the discovery of the Cairo Geniza early in the twentieth-century. This repository preserved a thousand years of history, highlighting commerce of the Mediterranean in particular. The official representative of British Jewry, the Board of Deputies collected and generated an encyclopaedic range of materials. Founded in 1760, as a joint venture

[86] Vladimir Cervin, "Problems in the Integration of the Afgan Nation," *Middle East Journal* 6:4 (Autumn 1952): 400-416; Peter G. Franck, "Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan" part I: The Impact of World Conditions, *Middle East Journal* 3:3 (July 1949): 293-314, and part II: Planning and Finance, *Middle East Journal* 3:4 (October 1949): 421-440; and "Economic Progress in an Encircled Land" *Middle East Journal* 10:1 (Winter 1956): 43-59.

[87] Maxwell J. Fry, *The Afghan Economy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).

between the Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities of London, records are available from 1830. The Board often intervened to assist Jewish communities overseas, and could sometimes influence British governmental policy. Although only loosely organized, this archive is an invaluable source for Judaic and diasporic history. The present study only touches upon the riches available.

The records for the Board of Deputies of British Jews (BoD) are stored at the London Metropolitan Archives. In-coming and out-going correspondence of the Board is preserved, as well as some letter drafts, and notes summarising previous policy written for the benefit of later staff. The Board of Deputies' archives contain detail of intra-Jewish communal activity, as well as the relationship between the Board and the Afghan Ambassador in London, the British Foreign Office, and its Legation in Kabul. This archive presents intricate patterns of correspondence. For example, one file has letters from Bukharan Jewish refugees in Kabul that were smuggled out to Peshawar, and then transmitted to the Bukharan community in Jerusalem, who passed them to the Bukharan Jews in London.[88] This group would translate the document (if written in Judeo-Persian) or submit it directly to the Board of Deputies if already in English. Later, the letter could be passed on to the Foreign Office, who contacted the British Legation in Kabul; thus completing the cycle. As far as I am aware, no other researcher has delved into the Board's archives on Afghanistan. While Audrey Burton examined this vast cache of documents at the London Metropolitan Archives, she only mentions it in passing.[89]

Scholars have made much more use of the holdings of the India Office Library (IOL). One of the most valuable files on the Jews of Afghanistan contains more than three hundred pages that deal solely with the situation of the Jewish refugees and residents there in the 1930s. Material in the Public Records Office (PRO) often overlaps with that found in the India Office. However, the records this author viewed

[88] See BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1 and 2 and Appendix 1 for a diagram of the patterns of Jewish correspondence in the 1930s.

[89] "The plight of the Bukharan Jews stranded in Persia and Afghanistan in the early 1930s is fully documented and makes sad reading, but it would take too long to recount." Audrey Burton, "Bukharan Jews, ancient and modern," *Jewish Historical Studies* 34 (1994-6): 63.

were compiled by date not by subject. Thus, collating material was far more time-consuming. Records about the Jewish community were grouped with many other subjects, spanning topics as diffuse as exchange rates and frontier intrigues. British archives contain a large amount of detailed information about Afghanistan's political and economic situation. It was of pivotal strategic importance to the empire, as this country guarded the way to India.

The diplomatic archives at the French Foreign Ministry in Paris, Quai d'Orsay (Qd'O) offer a different perspective. French diplomatic officials sent home less quantitative information, and tended to concentrate on analysing the origins and meanings of events. Curiously, the French Foreign Minister was highly critical of his Kabuli Legation in 1936. He felt that it was only an observation post, which did not have any political or economic influence.[90] Indeed, this lack of activity made the reports sent to Paris more thoughtful, and French officials often spotted trends years before the British, who were entangled in the minutiae of frontier intrigues, and the fringes of imperial administration. French sources, especially those written by Gabriel Bonneau are particularly astute when describing events of the late 1930s. They are all the more helpful when used in conjunction with American sources, as the chargé d'affaires fled Kabul in 1941, and joined the Free French in Cairo.[91]

The Alliance Israëlite Universelle (AIU) is a similar source to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. This organisation built Jewish schools throughout the Muslim Middle East, from Morocco to Iran, often providing the first opportunity for secular education for Jewish (and some non-Jewish) children in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Alliance's head teachers and country coordinators could become community leaders and unofficial representatives to the central government, especially in Iran where the arrival of a teacher was prayed for and greeted with great

[90] Quai d'Orsay, (hereafter: Qd'O) *Asie 1918-1940*, Afghanistan, vol. 44, Note from Foreign Minister (Paris), 6 February 1936.

[91] United States National Archives (hereafter: USNA), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-44, Box 5814, 890H.00/197, Bert Fish (Cairo) to Secretary of State (Washington), "Notes on the Situation in Kabul," 5 February 1941.

joy.[92] The Alliance dealt with the situation of Bukharan refugees in Iran. Their methods differed considerably from those of British Jews who assisted their co-religionists in Afghanistan. The Alliance was far more content to let their 'man on the scene' take the measures he deemed necessary, whereas the Board of Deputies maintained executive control from London. Occasionally, the secretary of the Alliance would offer critiques after a crisis had passed; but sometimes more concern was expressed about standards of French orthography.[93] The Alliance's archives show similar political developments in Iran and Afghanistan. In Iran, regional governors wanted to take harsh punitive measures against the refugees, but the strength of the central government appears to have mitigated some of this brutality and so the refugees fared better. This distinction is all the more interesting considering that Jews fleeing the Soviet Union and Afghanistan met with open hostility amongst some segments of the Iranian Jewish population, often the Alliance and the hidden community in Mashhad were the only sources of assistance.

The Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC) is the repository of documents on the Holocaust in France. In addition to a memorial and a museum, it contains all of the records of Vichy's Comissariat Général aux Questions Juives, as well as the files for the Drancy and Compiegne concentration camps. This archive has information on the plight of Jews from Afghanistan and Central Asia in France during the war. Scholars examining the Juguti episode particularly use this archive. In France, Georgian, Central Asian, Afghanistani, and Iranian Jews managed to avoid the Holocaust by walking precariously to safety through the nascent diplomatic ties between the Georgian government in exile and the occupying German authorities.

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[92] See for example, The Alliance Israelite Universelle's archive in Paris, (hereafter: AIU) microfilm roll 6, Iran (Yezd) II C 8, letter from Habbib Nehorai (London) to AIU (Paris), 31 January 1928. (A copy is also provided for the Israeli National Library at Hebrew University, Givat Ram, Jerusalem.) This correspondence includes a letter from the Jewish community of Yazd which asks "respected Merchants of London" for assistance in sending a teacher from the AIU. They write: "Since many years of hardship, toil, persecutions and real 'Galout' [exile] we come to understand that the only mean of relief is Education and Education alone."

[93] In the 1920s, the AIU even provided stationary imprinted with the following injunction: "Toutes les letters doivent porter un numéro d'ordre. ... Ce papier ne peut servir que pour la correspondence des directeurs avec le Comité Central. ... Toutes les letters doivent commencer par les mots: 'Monsieur le Président.'" ("All letters must be numbered. ... This stationary can only be used for correspondence with the directors of the Central Committee. ... All letters must start with the words: 'Mister President.'")

These Georgian leaders fled the Soviet Union in the 1920s, and settled in Paris. They maintained some contact with Nazi officials who hoped to use them after conquering the Caucasus. The Georgian representatives were highly protective of their Jewish compatriots in France and went to extraordinary lengths to ensure their safety. They claimed that their fellow Georgians were not Jews but 'Juguti,' who happened to practice the 'Israelite' faith. This movement spread to include the Mizrahi communities of the region. A series of courageous individuals created this elaborate charade, including Asaf Atchildi, born in Bukhara to a *Chala* family.[94] This archive is valuable in the current study as it illuminates the condition of Afghanistani Jews in Europe and the lengths that Afghan diplomats went to protect them.

I did not examine German archives in situ, though some sources were available at the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, India Office, and US National Archives. Instead, this work relies the *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, a published compilation of documents confiscated by the allies after World War II.[95] Mainly, they clarify the negotiations of the Minister of National Economy, 'Abd al-Majid Khan Zabuli in Berlin. This helps to partially explain the actions he took against the Jewish community in Afghanistan.

In Jerusalem, the Central Zionist Archives (CZA) contain the files of the World Zionist Organisation (*ha-Histadrut ha-Tzionit ha-'Olamit*), the Jewish Agency (*Sochnut l'Eretz Yisrael*), and other affiliated organisations including those of the *Yishuv* such as the General Council of the Jews of Palestine (*Va'ad Leumi*). Israeli researchers have examined these files intensively, but the material has seldom been presented in English.

[94] *Chalas* were Jews who had been targeted, and forcibly converted to Islam as individuals in the Emirate of Bukhara. See Ehsan Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), s.v. "Bukharan Jews" by Michael Zand. For the full Juguti story, see: Levi Eligulashvili "How the Jews of Gruziya in Occupied France were Saved" and Asaf Atchildi "Rescue of Jews of Bukharan, Iranian and Afghan Origin in Occupied France (1940-1944)" both in *Yad Vashem Studies* VI (1967): 251-281; Warren Green, "The Fate of Oriental Jews in Vichy France," *Wiener Library Bulletin* xxxii: [new series] 49-50 (1979): 40-50; Binyamim Ben-David, "*Hatzlat Yehudei Bukhara she-b'Paris,*" *Pe'amim* 27 (1986): 26-9; or Ahmad Mahrad, "Iranian Jews in Europe during World War II," (in Farsi) in ed. Homa Sarshar, *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, vol. III (Beverly Hills: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, Winter 1999).

[95] *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1954). (Hereafter: DGFP)

The files of the U.S. mission to Afghanistan are held at the National Archives (USNA) near Washington D.C. While the records have a similar structure to British diplomatic sources, and document the daily operations of the American presence in Kabul, the emphasis is more on economic growth and development projects. Detailed political intelligence is far less prominent than among British sources. An American mission was first established in 1942, and archives from those early years are more personal than other records. Jokes are circulated, and details of foreign women's activities and social events in Kabul are included. American diplomats maintained friendships with Afghan officials, and this interaction was crucial in ameliorating the position of the Jews during the late 1940s. Anti-Semitic slurs or stereotypes, which are common in British and French official documents, do not appear in the U.S. material.

This is the first work on the Jews of Afghanistan that predominantly uses archival material in English, both from the United Kingdom and the United States. Generally Israeli scholars use archival material from Israel, though Ben-Zion Yehoshua examined documents in the German Bundesarchiv, the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, and the Alliance Israëlite Universelle in Paris. For Jewish history, large national archives like the India Office, Public Records Office, the United States' National Archives, or even the Quai d'Orsay remain under utilized. Yet all of the major researchers in mainstream Afghan history use national archives to underpin their work. Once more, this shows the gulf between the Judaic and general studies of Afghanistan. This thesis aims to build a bridge, connecting histories that occurred together, but which have been remembered and recorded separately.

The following chapter examines the beginning of Jewish settlement in modern Afghanistan. It traces the patterns of their daily lives, specifically their role in trade, and the unusual domestic arrangements that supported this economic niche. Chapter 3 discusses the historical background of Afghanistan between 1747 and 1933. It examines the rulers' strategies, particularly towards minorities and the Jewish community when available. The economic policies of Muhammad Nadir Shah (r.

1929-33) are viewed in detail, as they precipitated the suffering of the community. In the year 1933 sharp change occurred as the king was assassinated, and a refugee crisis engulfed the northern tier of the country. Chapter 4 discusses the impact of Soviet refugees upon the political and economic policies of Afghanistan. The government's attitude towards Bukharan Jews who fled the excesses of Stalin had a profound impact on the indigenous Jewish community. Afghan authorities viewed both groups in an equivalent and hostile manner. They were thought to be potential Soviet spies, and forced to leave northern Afghanistan. This marked a radical disruption of settlement and employment patterns, and signalled the beginning of the demise of the Afghanistani Jewish community. Chapter 5 examines the rationale behind the Jewish expulsion from northern Afghanistan in greater detail, particularly the government's policies of monopolizing wide swathes of the export and import trade. The advent of World War II caused anxiety for the government as Afghanistan tried to remain neutral. However, Afghanistan frequently used Germany's status as a balance between the Soviet Union and Great Britain. Chapter 6 examines German influence in Afghanistan and how it impacted the Jewish community. Contacts between Afghan authorities and the Yishuv are discussed, along with an examination of the volatile shifts in the economy during the 1940s. After the war, intra-Jewish relations were transformed. While still unequal, the relationship between Ashkenzim, Sephardim and Mizrahim became far more equalitarian, as each community realised how its survival was linked to the others. Chapter 7 discusses the physical departure of the community, as they made contact with the newly established government of Israel and gradually made their way westward.

In some ways, the story of the Jewish community in Afghanistan is a microcosm of the convulsions of the mid-twentieth century. Their experiences precede European Jewish history, and simultaneously reverse fundamental assumptions within Judaic studies. These include the idea that only German Jewry suffered from the Third Reich's early policies, and that the position of Jews in the Muslim world fell after World War II, with the growth of Zionism. This history shows that the situation of a remote *Mizrahi* community changed well before the creation of Israel - and the consequent Muslim response - endangered their continued existence.

Chapter Two:

Jewish Settlement in Afghanistan: Origins and Customs

Synopsis

This chapter will present information on the origins and early settlement of Jews in Afghanistan. It will particularly study the more traumatic events of the nineteenth century, which helped to shape the community. Most notably, this includes the forcible mass conversion of the Mashhadi Jews in 1839, and the expulsion from Herat seventeen years later. The second section of this chapter examines aspects of daily life from a more anthropological perspective, as well as the commuity's economic relationships with other ethnic groups, especially the Turkmen tribes.

Theories on the Origins of Afghanistani Jewry

Reliable information about the Jews of Afghanistan before the nineteenth-century is difficult to obtain. The ancient Jewish community was well known among horrified rabbis of Baghdad for its colourful heretics or freethinkers, most notably Hiwi al-Balkhi, who lived in the second half of the ninth century. Before the thirteenth-century, Afghanistan was a crossroads for many of the world's religions. Hiwi was influenced by this chorus of perspectives, and wrote a polemic work that contained two hundred criticisms of the Bible.[1] After the Mongol invasion in 1220, this record becomes fragmentary. For the next five hundred years, very little is known. Clearly, the Jewish community suffered along with the rest of the populace under successive waves of wars and massacres. Between the reigns of Ghengis Khan and Nadir Shah, there is little if any information about this remote group. Even data on the far larger Persian Jewish community are sparse. A notable exception is the pioneering work of Vera Moreen.[2]

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[1] *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), s.v. "Hiwi al-Balkhi."

[2] See Vera Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study of Babai Ibn Luft's Chronicle* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987) and *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion: The Kitab-i Sar Guzasht-i Kashan of Babai B. Farhad* (Stuttgard: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990).

One way to obtain information about this group when no written evidence is extant is by examining religious rituals, as Zohar Hanegbi and Bracha Yaniv do in their work on the synagogue. Afghanistani Jews preserve ancient customs that have been lost among almost all other Jewish communities in the world.[3] While the history of the Jewish community of Afghanistan can only be documented with some certainty for the period between the 1740s and 1980s, traces of older, unique influences were preserved in the religious rituals and oral culture of the community. A small number of individuals may have survived the isolation and endemic warfare of the region, transmitting specifically Afghanistani Jewish customs to later arrivals.

Another means of thinking about Jewish history in this region is to see it as closely linked to the geographic memory of ancient Khorasan. By examining these ancient delimitations, one gains a context for the migrations and ties of later centuries. The Jews of Afghanistan are a part of a cultural continuum that stretches from Mashhad to Herat, Merv, Bukhara, and Samarkand. In some ways this history has been dwarfed by the experiences of their more populous Mashhadi and Bukharan Jewish neighbours. Fischel defines Khorasan as an area whose borders were never fixed, yet included: Eastern Persia, Afghanistan, part of Turkestan, and Transoxiana.[4] While this view only encompasses the political geography of the eighth to the thirteenth-centuries, and stops abruptly with the Mongol invasions, nonetheless, it is an important concept to grasp when attempting to characterise later regional history. Khorasan's boundaries shrank considerably with the advent of the Safavids in the sixteenth-century, and the term "lost its all-embracing medieval connotation."[5] By the twentieth-century, it only characterised a province in northeastern Iran, which was itself only a small part of ancient Khorasan. Nonetheless, the wider geographical concept, which was used by the inhabitants of the far older area, seems to have persisted. Sayed Askar Mousavi

[3]Hanegbi and Yaniv, see page 22 for a discussion of the *Malbush* and page 33 regarding the custom of nine distinct lamps instead of a *Hanukkiyah.*

[4]Walter J. Fischel, "The Jews of Central Asia (Khorasan) in Medieval Hebrew and Islamic Literature," reprinted for private circulation from *Historia Judaica*, VII:1(April 1945): 30. Another definition for Khorasan is "... a vast country to the east of Iran, comprising the lands situated to the south of the Amu-Darya ... and to the north of the Hindu kush, but embracing also politically Ma-wara al-Nahr (Transoxiana) and Sidjistan (Sakastana)." *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1927 ed., s.v. "Khorasan."

[5] Fischel 1945, 50.

contends that Afghanistan was not given its current name until the second half of the nineteenth century.[6] The country was known as Khorasan, and only changed its name later, under the influence of Pashtun nationalism. Mousavi contends that even today, it may be more accurate to call non-Pashtun residents of Afghanistan "Khorasani."[7]

A second way of conceptualising the post-Mongol Jewish community is to see it as developing along the frontiers of the Safavid (1500-1736) and Mughal (1500-1857) empires, and the northern Uzbek khanates. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the territory that later became Afghanistan was governed by the Mughal Empire in the east, the Safavids in the west, and Uzbek khanates in the north. Both empires faced considerable difficulties maintaining authority over Pashtun tribes. (As there were few Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan, the Uzbeks did not face this challenge.) The Mughal leadership in Kabul found that military action was often unsuccessful, and instead "pursued a delicate policy of divide and rule, hoping that the Afghans would dissipate their energies in tribal warfare." The Safavid strategy was far more intrusive and disruptive but ultimately effective. They conscripted tribesmen into the imperial army, placated or banished troublesome Pashtun leaders, and even transplanted large groups of people. For example, Shah Abbas I (1588-1624) transferred most of the 'Abdali tribe from Kandahar to Herat.[8]

As the Safavids rose to power during the sixteenth-century, Persian Jewry was divided between those living in Persia itself and the Sunni khanates. On the northern rim of what later became known as Afghanistan, a small Jewish presence began to settle, most frequently amongst the Sunni Muslim Tajik population, as these groups filled a similar economic niche, that of trade and mercantile activity which was, as Elphinstone noted, renounced by the Afghans themselves.[9] This population found it difficult to survive, and smaller Jewish settlements were unable to interact with each

[6] Mousavi, 3.

[7] In justifying the use of this term, Mousavi writes: "Khorasan was a country in whose cultural, economic, and political development they have taken part, without submission to domination or monopoly of power by any one nationality or tribe." (Ibid, 5)

[8] Gregorian, 44.

[9] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India* (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1969), 312. This is a reprint of an 1815 edition.

other because of "the extreme animosity of warring feudal despots."[10] The communities became isolated and many withered away. Walter J. Fischel suggests that a small number of Persian Jews, followers of Sabbetai Zvi, may have emigrated after the Messiah failed to appear and converted to Islam in 1666. Owing to the harshness of their existence, Persian Jewry was particularly suspectible to messianic movements. After one more disappointment, they may have sought a physical escape, to lands with greater religious tolerance. Possibly, they settled in Georgia, Afghanistan, the cities of Central Asia, or even Baghdad.[11] While the debacle of false prophet turned apostate may have caused some to emigrate, an even simpler rationale can be spotted. Throughout Safavid rule, but particularly during its decline, religious and secular leaders tried to "cleanse" Persia of the ritual "pollution" of unbelievers.[12]

In the seventeenth-century, Persian Jewry was subjected to further oppression, as Iran became even more firmly Shi'i.[13] At first Turkmen and Sunnis within the empire were targeted; later non-Muslims groups, Armenian Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews also fell victim. Between 1656-1662, almost all of the Jewish communities in Persia were forcibly converted to Shi'i Islam.[14] The sole exception was Yazd where Muslim inhabitants came to the defence of their Jewish neighbours.[15] Jews were given the choice of conversion, migration, or martyrdom. Very few chose to migrate, as they felt attached to their homeland, though small numbers did leave. This may be significant when assessing the birth of the modern Afghanistani Jewish community. A small number of new arrivals may have had a significant impact. Few Persian Jews were killed for their faith except for the Farahabad community. Most instead chose the path

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[10] Kupovetsky, 55.

[11] Walter J. Fischel, "The Jews of Medieval Iran from the 16th to the 18th centuries: Political, Economic, and Communal Aspects." In *Irano-Judaica I* ed. Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1982): 285. Sabbetai Zvi sent emissaries far and wide, and therefore gained a following even in Russia and Persia. Most followers of Sabbetai Zvi returned to normative Judaism, though some of his most faithful supporters also outwardly converted to Islam and are known today as Dönme.

[12] This often occurred during the onset of a Shah's reign. See Rudi Matthee, "The Career of Mohammad Beg, Grand Vizier of Shah 'Abbas II (r.1642-1666)" in *Iranian Studies* 1-4:24 (1991): 27-9.

[13] Vera Moreen, "The Problems of Conversion among Iranian Jews in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" in *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions,* eds. William Brinner and Stephen Ricks (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989): 159-162.

[14] Moreen 1989, 158.

[15] Fischel 1982, 279.

of the *anusim* (forcible conversion) while maintaining as many Jewish customs as possible in secret. When Muhammad Beg, Grand Vizir of Shah Abbas II (r. 1642-1666) fell from power in 1662, the crypto-Jewish community was allowed to revert to an open practice of their religious heritage upon payment of large fines.[16]

Jewish Settlement in Mashhad

Nadir Shah Afshari, a Sunni Turkman general who dismantled the Safavid dynasty from within in 1736, targeted members of the Qazvin Jewish community for resettlement. In this respect, his aims seem to have been somewhat more pacific than his forcible resettlements of large tribes throughout Persian territory. Elphinstone remarked that Nadir Shah, like his predecessors, used population transfers to achieve three objectives: punish recalcitrant groups, achieve military aims, and stimulate trade. The latter issue was clearly the motivation for his treatment of the Jewish community, as it did not pose a military threat.[17] However, one may detect an underlying element of anti-Shi'i aggression. Nadir Shah established new Jewish and Christian communities in Mashhad and Kabul as a conscious affront to Shi'i sensibilities. Some scholars argue that the Afshari Shah was a religious reformer who showed "an amazing degree of tolerance towards non-Muslims."[18] Vera Moreen disputes this explanation, and suspects an alternative rationale, particularly regarding settlement in the holy city of Mashhad. She writes that the settlement of *dhimmis* was meant "partly to irritate the Shi'is ... and partly no doubt, because he would not have considered the maltreatment of these *dhimmis* as a serious loss."[19]

A third explanation is that Nadir Shah did not mean for Jews to settle in Mashhad at all, but rather that they were stranded there after his death. Although very little historical documentation is available on the settlement of Jews in Mashhad, Raphael Patai was able to supplement it through the "practically unanimous folk tradition"

[16] Moreen 1989, 159-162.
[17] Elphinstone, 321-2.
[18] Fischel 1982, 283.
[19] Moreen 1989, 168 note 41.

recounted by recent Mashhadi arrivals to Jerusalem in the 1940s. According to what Patai discovered, Nadir Shah brought back an enormous amount of precious loot after his invasion of India in 1740. He wanted to build a secure place to store his treasure, and selected an old mountain fortress, Qalat, fifty miles north of Mashhad. Indians reinforced this structure, and Nadir did not trust Shi'i Persians to guard his cache. He asked the city of Kazvin to send forty Jewish families, as they were considered more reliable. When Nadir was assassinated in 1747, "only seventeen of them had arrived in Qalat, while sixteen had only got as far as Mashhad, and the remaining seven had only reached Sabzawar." Thus, the Jewish community of Mashhad was established fully only *after* the death of Nadir Shah, as the appointed families in Qalat and Sabzawar all joined those who had already reached the holy city.[20]

Whatever the reasons, it is clear that large numbers of people were brought into Mashhad and the Khorasan province during Nadir Shah's reign. Perhaps as many as 60,000 families (approx. 300,000 individuals) became part of the enormous population transfer.[21] Jews and Armenian Christians comprised a small current of this torrent.

Jewish Settlement in Afghanistan

Far less information is available on the establishment of the Jewish community in Kabul. Gregorian is one of the rare authors who provide information on the Kabuli community before 1839, as it was a very small group. The majority of the Jews in Afghanistan arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century, mostly settling in Herat after the forcible conversion of the Mashhadi community (described below). Gregorian confirms that Nadir Shah settled many Jews in Kabul as a way to encourage trade between India and Persia in 1736.[22] While the precise number of Jews is unknown, it seems that Nadir Shah made an unambiguous decision to stimulate trade through the placement of religious minorities in strategic sites.

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[20] Patai 1997, 26.

[21] Azaria Levy, "Evidence and Documents concerning the History of the Jews of Mashad," chapter in *The Jews of Mashad* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1998), 1; citing L. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah* (London: 1938): 51-2, 54, 89, 91.

[22] Gregorian, 63.

Hindus, Armenians, and Jews were considered vital to the successful flow of trade, because they were not subject to Islamic injunctions against usury, and therefore could lend and exchange currency.[23] Evidence of the Armenian community's foundation supports what is known of the reasons for Jewish settlement as well. In the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, Armenian traders were found in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, and Kandahar. By 1670, they were flourishing, and less than forty years later the Armenians managed to persuade the Mughal authorities to lift some of the more onerous conditions of the Pact of 'Umar.[24] One year after the arrival of Jews in Kabul, the Armenian community received an infusion of two to three hundred families also sent on Nadir's orders.[25] It seems clear that the establishment of non-Muslim entrepreneurial minorities was meant to encourage regional trade.

At this juncture, it is also important to stress the close links between settlement and trade. The modern Jewish community's initial arrival in Afghanistan was due to the potential for commercial activities. Throughout the next two hundred years, as these opportunities narrowed, the community also shrank. Economic options became one of the most significant factors for this remote, and often isolated Jewish community. Until *anusim* refugees fled from Mashhad, Afghanistan's Jewish population was still very small (perhaps no more than a thousand souls).

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[23] Ibid, 24; and Lee, 84.

[24] This was a "writ of protection" whereby non-Muslims could remain Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian by paying extra taxes, and generally behaving as a conquered people. Some restrictions were meant to be demeaning, like being forbidden from riding a horse, having to use rope as a belt, or wear two different coloured shoes. Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979), 25-6; Bat Ye'or, *Dhimmi Peoples: Oppressed Nations* (Geneva: Editions de l'Avenir, 1978), 4. In 1870, J. Alexander described the restrictions incumbent upon the Jews in Bukhara. "[T]heir head-dress consists of small caps of dark-coloured cloth, instead of the usual turban [and] no Jew is permitted to ride either on horseback or on asses, within the precincts of the towns. This prohibition is a very vexatious one, owing to the wretched state of the streets in those parts during the rainy season. Moreover, there is no law to prevent any Mussulman from striking a Jew within the town, and even killing him outside the walls." J. Alexander, *The Jews: Their Past, Present, and Future: being a succinct History of God's Ancient people in all Ages; together with a brief account of the origin and formation of the Talmud* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1870), 104.

[25] Gregorian, 65.

The Forcible Conversion of the Mashhadi Community

In 1839, the final and most definitive act of forcible mass conversion to Shi'i Islam occurred in Mashhad. It became known as *Allah Daad* or 'God Gave,' meaning perhaps that God gave the Muslims more converts. These Jews were never allowed to return to an open practice of Judaism in Persia. In March 1839, the Jewish community was accused of insulting the prophet Muhammad, and a riot commenced. In order to avoid widespread murder, the city's religious authorities intervened, and presented conversion as an alternative. This was accepted, and the newcomers were fittingly called *Jadid al-Islam*, or 'New Muslims.'[26]

While the forcible conversion of Mashhad's Jewish community does have a precedent in Persian history, it also appears to be directly related to the political situation at that time. The riot or pogrom against the Jewish community, instigated by the local Shi'i population had social and economic roots, such as anger at the Jewish presence in Mashhad, as well as their apparent economic success without a demonstration of sufficient subservience.[27] Yet, perhaps the most important factor was the war between Persia and the ruler of Herat, which precipitated British involvement and the First Anglo-Afghan War. In July 1837, the Qajar shah besieged Herat seeking to: "extend Persia's influence up to the Amu Darya and to deal out retribution to the slave-trading amirs of Badghis, Turkistan and Khwarazm, who had turned much ... of Khurasan into wasteland."[28] However, the shah was unsuccessful, and in September 1838, after the British landed on the Persian Gulf island of Kharak, the Persians were forced to retreat.[29]

Not surprisingly, Khorasan's political and economic climate was destabilized after the defeat. The resulting strains meant that the fragile truce made ninety years before

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[26]For a compilation of all of the various accounts of this event, see Patai 1997, 51-64.

[27] "The motivation of simple robbery seems likely. ... So is the mob action, upon incitement by a Sayyid and without the knowledge of the leading religious authorities of the city." Patai, 1997, 53.

[28]Lee, 148.

[29]Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars, Revolutions, and Insurgencies* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 125.

tolerating a Jewish presence in the holy city was broken. Two months after *Allah Daad*, a man simply known as Samuel wrote a note inside the binding of a prayer book describing the forcible conversion.

> 'A memorial. In the year 5599 [1839] evildoers calumnated the Jews. On the 12th of Nissan they broke into the camp [quarter] of the Jews and killed about 32 of them. The others they forced to convert - had they not converted, they would have killed all of them, Israelites, judges, Kohens and Levites. Having no choice all of them said *La Ilaha ill'Allah.* ... Now we have no other hope, unless, first, God has mercy upon us; second, King Messiah comes; and third, the English come and save us. ...' [30]

It is fascinating that the only non-divine option is British intervention. From Samuel's note, it seems likely that the Jews were familiar with British strength and their influence upon the Qajar dynasty. This hope was not unusual. Even the famous *shaliah* (emissary engaged for fundraising by the four holy communities of Tiberias, Safed, Hebron, and Jerusalem) sent to the Emirate of Bukhara in the early nineteenth-century, Joseph Maman from Tetuan, said: " 'Oh Lord! When will the time come that the followers of Jesus shall take possession of this country?'"[31] In fact, British influence in Persia started with the Napoleonic Wars and grew throughout the nineteenth century. Great Britain wanted to control the Southern and Eastern parts of Persia to protect entrance to India. Nikki Keddie writes that the British wished to assist the development of trade and the safety of foreigners who sought to do business.[32] As Jews were often involved in trade and linked to communities far beyond the borders of Persia, they were early British allies. Consequently, it follows that British strength was known and admired among the Khorasani Jewish community.

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[30] Patai 1997, 59.

[31] *Jewish Encyclopedia,* 1906 ed., s.v. "Bokhara." While hoping for Christian, European political control, this same man did not hesitate publicly to burn a Hebrew translation of the New Testament. See Audrey Burton, "Bukharan Jews, ancient and modern." *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 34 (1994-96), 50.

[32] Nikki Keddie, "Iran under the later Qajars, 1848-1922," ed. Peter Avery et al., *Cambridge History of Iran: from Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol.7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 179-180.

Soon after the forcible conversion, the Mashhadi community divided into two groups. Those known as *Talebin al-Islam* remained in Mashhad for up to two hundred years. They were wealthier crypto-Jews who had close connections with the Muslims. They took Persian names, went to the mosque frequently, and travelled on pilgrimage to Karbala and Mecca (often stopping in Jerusalem on the way back). They would invite Shi'i dignitaries into their homes for celebrations, and some even became important officials of the Great Mosque of Imam Reza. The other group was known as the *Mitasebin* and they performed the minimum of Islamic rituals necessary to avoid the suspicion of their Muslim neighbours. They were poorer and very devout; consequently, they quickly left Mashhad, fleeing into the northern desert.[33] Some joined Turkmen tribes who fought against the Persians and the Emir of Bukhara, while others took refuge with the neighbouring Jewish communities in Khiva and Bukhara, and especially Herat.[34]

The flight from Mashhad marks the beginning of a more substantial Jewish community in Afghanistan, and Joseph Wolff reports that the Jadidim were able to bribe their way out of Mashhad.[35] Others appear to have simply fled to Afghanistan and Central Asia.[36] It is interesting to note that Afghanistan's largest Jewish populations stemmed from waves of refugees, first in the 1830s they came from Persia, while one hundred years later, they fled Soviet Central Asia.

The Persian Siege of Herat

Many former Mashhadi *anusim* returned to Judaism in the closest Afghan city, Herat, despite the marked brutality of its ruler. Between 1839 and 1856, Herat remained

[33] Azaria Levy, "Evidence and Documents Concerning the History of the Jews of Mashad," chapter in Levy 1998,10.

[34]Joseph Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara, in the years 1843-45, to ascertain the fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Conolly*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London: John W. Parker, 1845), 157-9.

[35]"Mirza 'Askari is very fond of money, and after receiving a few *tomans* from a Jewish family, he allowed a considerable number of them to emigrate to Herat, Yazd, and Teheran, where they live again as Jews." Patai 1997, 54, citing Joseph Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara, in the years 1843-45* (London: 1845), 394.

[36]Patai 1997, 59, citing Samad Aqa ben Yosef Dilmani. Unpublished document in the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. Doc. no. S25/5291.

a *de facto* independent state, although closely allied to Persia. In the autumn of 1855, Shahzada Muhammad Yusuf, the grandson of the Persian Shah Zaman, then claimed Herat for himself. Persia recognised the new ruler, although he was not as pliant as his predecessor.[37]

When the Afghan amir, Dost Muhammad took Kandahar in 1855, Muhammad Yusuf became concerned that his territory would be targeted next, and asked the Persian shah for help. Shah Nasir al-Din was more than happy to oblige and soon 20,000 troops arrived. With the assistance of his vizir, Muhammad Yusuf was overthrown. At this point, the Persian army had agreed to withdraw. However, the governor of Mashhad and Khorasan ordered the city gates of Herat open. When the townsfolk refused, the Persian army put Herat under siege from March to October 1856. Persia then chose Ahmad Khan, nephew to Dost Muhammad Khan as Herat's next leader.[38]

Just as in 1838, Britain stopped the Shah's military operation in Herat by attacking the Persian Gulf in Bushire with forces proceeding towards Shiraz in December 1856.[39] Within weeks Nasir al-Din backed down, and the Treaty of Paris was signed on March 26th, 1857, bringing the short Anglo-Persian War to a close.[40] Persia was forced to withdraw from Herat and abandon all future aggression against the city.[41]

During the Persian retreat in March 1857, the army assembled the entire Jewish community, ex-*Jadid al-Islam* and long-time residents alike. After all of their property was looted, hundreds of families were put in chains, and forced to walk to Mashhad. It was almost as if they were treated as spoils of war, especially the Jadidis who dared to break the law by fleeing Persia and returning to Judaism.[42]

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[37] Lee, 185, 218, 243, 250.

[38] Lee, 251 and Levy ,"The Expulsion of the Jews of Mashad from Herat, 1856-1859" chapter in Levy 1998, 8.

[39] Levy, 9.

[40] Nikki Keddie in ed. Peter Avery, et al., 183.

[40] Lee, 185 and 218.

[41] Gregorian, 104.

[42] Levy, 1 and 9.

After twenty days of marching, the Herati Jews were "imprisoned in a dilapidated, abandoned inn known as Baba Qudrat" on the edge of Mashhad. One survivor of this event wrote that:

> Even the non-Jews cried over our fate. So numerous were the cripples, converts, children, poor and elderly who could not comprehend the words said to them, who returned their souls to God in this way -- out of hunger, thirst, cold, the hardships of the journey, the fear of the regiment and (beneath) its horses.[43]

Estimates at that time state that between three and four hundred people died within the first year. Many more could have perished if it were not for the assistance of the *anusim* remaining in Mashhad, who risked their own lives to bring the prisoners food.[44]

The Persians claimed that the Mashhadi Jews were Persian subjects who migrated against the wishes of the Shah. In one letter the ruler of Herat told the British representative that Persia considered the Jews "deserters and traitors" who had illegally fled the land of their birth, committed apostasy by returning to Judaism and treason by aiding the Afghans and British. While this might explain part of the behaviour towards the once hidden community, it does not clarify the Persians' actions against long-resident Herati Jews. Another rationale is that the Persians suspected them of collaborating both with the Herati Sunnis and with the British.[45] While it is true that a handful of Mashhadi *anusim* worked for the British in the 1840s in Bukhara, the charge of espionage at this juncture appears to stem from misinformation.[46] While the Herati Jews' property had been looted, they were still required to pay a ransom of 15,000

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[43] Ibid, 11.

[44] Ibid, 13, 16-7. A British major also helped organize a distribution of food. (see Lee, 253, ft 188)

[45] Ibid, 10. "Persia refused to accept that the Herat Jews in Mashhad were covered by the terms of the Treaty of Paris, which required all prisoners to be returned to their homelands." (Lee, 253, ft 188)

[46] Patai 1997, 65-7; and Levy, 9. Persian officers found a letter on one former Mashhadi resident addressed to the British in Kandahar. It protested the Persian army's treatment of the population, which included robbery, rape, and murder. The officers came to their own conclusion that this letter had prompted the Shah's call for retreat, rather than the (then unknown) British invasion of Bushire.

Tomans to the Persian government, while the governor of Khorasan demanded another 7,000 Tomans for his own personal enrichment.[47]

Two years after the mass imprisonment, Herati Jews were released following the intercession of daring *anusim* emissaries. Karbilai Ismail Dilmani and Aqa 'Abd al-Rahman Aharon pleaded their case before the shah, who gave the men an order for the release of the Herati Jewish community.[48] The shah may not have been aware of the actions of his military leadership. Later, the British forced the amir of Herat to pay Jewish merchants 700 Tomans in compensation for the funds extorted before the expulsion.[49] In fact, every time the property of the Jews was looted in Herat, the Jadidim of Mashad would send money, food, and clothing to assist them.[50]

However, the suffering of the Jewish community did not end with their return to Herat. Only four years later, in 1863, the Afghan ruler Dost Muhammad Khan conquered the city.[51] After the capture, he looted the property of the Jews. This was not terribly unusual, for during difficult times, the Jewish Quarter was often attacked, money extorted, or notables imprisoned. Members of the community would then flee to the countryside.[52]

During the second half of the nineteenth-century, the economic role of the Jews declined. This was due to a deteriorating economic situation within the country, the incorporation of large parts of Central Asia into the Russian Empire, and increasing discrimination against the Jewish community in Afghanistan. Vartan Gregorian states that many Jews left Afghanistan secretly in the years between 1860 and 1866. Their activities were no longer predominantly commercial, as they were overwhelmed by

[47] Levy, 14-17.
[48] Ibid, 16.
[49] Public Records Office (hereafter: PRO) FO/60/240 Letter from William Doria (Goolehek) to Charles Wood (Teheran), 17 October 1859 (received 19 Nov.) With thanks to Michael Rubin for bringing this file to my attention.
[50] Patai 1997, 71.
[51] Some British officials in the mid-twentieth century considered this to be the crowning achievement of Afghanistan's greatest ruler. See IOL L/PS/12/1321: A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part I, 1747-1919, 3.
[52] Bezalel in Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 20-1.

Hindu competition. Instead, Jewish men found new roles as shopkeepers, physicians, chemists, distillers, or karakul traders.[53]

The position of the Jews was often precarious, and the nineteenth-century is rife with examples of death and destruction. In addition to other difficulties, the community could be blamed for natural disasters. In 1871, they were attacked during a famine, though the precise cause of this attack is unknown. Political events also left their mark upon the Jews of Afghanistan. In 1876, a revolt by Uzbeks in Maimana led to a massacre of eleven rabbis and two students. This was a great blow to the community, and even a hundred years later the anniversary of these men's deaths was still being commemorated.[54] In 1879, members of the Herati community were harmed during a rebellion against the British, which degenerated into a riot.[55] Thousands of Jews fled to Persia in 1870 and 1878. In the first instance, they were forced to pay a large war tax (*harbiyeh*) and provide 300 labourers for the army. The community correctly viewed this as a sign of coming persecution.[56] In 1878, a military draft was instituted and 2,000 Jews escaped to Persia.[57] In parallel with the human destruction, the synagogues in Maimana, Balkh, and Herat all collapsed through neglect.[58] The Jewish community's position only improved during Habibullah's reign in 1901.[59]

Daily Life among the Jews of Afghanistan

Most of what is known about the communal life of Afghan Jewry comes from the early twentieth-century, as this is the apex of their modern history in Afghanistan. The information about quotidian patterns comes from writings on the ethnography of the community, particularly the work of Erich Brauer, Raphael Patai, and No'am Bar 'am-

[53] Gregorian, 65.
[54] Reuven Kashani, *Yehudei Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1975), 11.
[55] Hanegbi and Yaniv,15.
[56] S. Landshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East* (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1950), 68; and Nehemiah Robinson, *La Perse, L'Afghanistan et Les Communautés Juives de Ces Deux Pays* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 1953), 27. This document appears to be a French translation of the English original.
[57] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 16.
[58] Lee, xxix.
[59] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 16.

Ben Yossef, and mostly refers to events during the reigns of Habibullah (r.1901-1919) and Amanuallah (r. 1919-1929). While these sources are limited, they provide enough to sketch information about the community's basic patterns. Indeed, the specific restrictions imposed upon the Jewish community in the 1930s and 1940s can be understood only after an account of older quotidian patterns. Without an explanation of the centrality of trade for the Jewish community of Afghanistan, for example, it would be difficult to understand why being prohibited from the northern rim of the country was so disabling. This section will describe domestic conditions, the status of women, and men's occupations, as well as communal structures, economic patterns, and international connections. These last factors were particularly important, as communication was funnelled through trade routes. Ultimately, this led to awareness and assistance from elsewhere, and accounts for the documentation of part of this history in London archives.

Like those of their Bukharan co-religionists, the houses of Afghanistani Jews differed from their Muslim neighbours in that there were no separate quarters for men and women.[60] Most of the life of women and children took place in the home. In Herat, between three and seven nuclear families shared one large household that consisted of a two- or three-storied residence built around a courtyard. The house was divided into summer and winter quarters (on the north side, ground floor, or on the south side, first floor, respectively) and contained a courtyard with a well, storage rooms for food, firewood, a small garden, a chicken coop, and a shed for cows or sheep. The men would buy large quantities of staple foods that would be stored in adobe silos. Often homes were built so close together that it was possible to pass from the roof of one to another without descending into the street. Roofs were also actively used in the summer months for socializing or sleeping.[61]

[60] Valery Dymshits,ed. *Facing West: Oriental Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, n.d. [1997?]), 64.

[61] Bar 'am- Ben Yossef, 33-4.

Betrothal and Marriage Customs

Jews would marry very young, even younger than their Muslim neighbours. A woman could die at thirteen while giving birth, or conversely, become a great grandmother at forty.[62] If a family lost several children, at the next birth a mock marriage between an elderly person and the infant would be held. This would be done to trick the evil eye.[63] At every festival, the parents would send customary gifts to the elderly individual, as if s/he were really engaged to the child. Early marriage guarded against assimilation.[64] This may have been more common among the Herati community as many of them came from Mashhad. When they were leading crypto-Jewish lives in Persia, parents would betroth their infants as a way of preventing marriage, or conflicts over arranging marriages, with normative Muslims. They were even known to make provisional arrangements during a woman's pregnancy.[65] Patai tells the story of how one girl in Mashhad was not married by age eight. One night the head of the community came to her father and told him to marry her off immediately in case a Muslim family were to enquire after her. She was married before turning nine to a young man of seventeen. However, several years passed before the marriage was consummated, and she did not give birth until age sixteen.[66] In other parts of Afghanistan, the community did not feel under such pressure; and marriages would be conducted with young men older than fifteen, and young women aged nine to fourteen.[67] Just as in Mashhad, when marriages occurred between children, the relationship would not be consummated immediately.

One of only two books translated into English about the Jews of Afghanistan examines wedding customs in detail. As these sources are more easily available to a

[62]Gershom Gorenberg, "Territory of Myth," *Jerusalem Report*, 16 July 1992, 49.

[63] In a similar vein, Brauer reports that while Kurdish Jews did not "marry off" babies thought to be in danger other measures were taken to trick the evil eye. These include "selling" the child to a female relative, or pretending that the baby is a pauper, or even symbolically trading the baby for a puppy. Brauer 1993, 172-3.

[64] Bar'am-Ben Yossef, 43.

[65] In the early 1940s, Brauer reported that his informant, Abraham Shabetai said that "just before his birth his father said to his uncle, who had an infant daughter, 'If a son is born to me I should like to marry him to your daughter,' and in due time the match was arranged." Brauer 1942, 127.

[66] Patai 1997, 232.

[67] Brauer 1942, 127, and Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 43.

Western audience, only a brief sketch of the elaborate rituals will be provided here. Unlike the practice in Muslim communities, great pains were taken to ensure that the expenses of the wedding festivities were divided equally between both families. The bride's mother would prepare "clothing, bathing and cosmetic accessories, curtains, tablecloths, bedding, pillows and pillowcases, fabrics and sewing items, and kitchen and serving utensils, as well as personal gifts to the bridegroom." The groom's mother would arrange "jewelry, dresses, scarves, fabrics, part of the bedding, and other furnishings of the room set aside for the couple."[68] The groom's family would pay for the expenses of the bride's party at the *hammam*, just as the bride's family paid for groom's *hammam* expenses. Two betrothal ceremonies or *shirinikhori* (literally 'eating the sweets') would be held, one at the bride's house, and one at the groom's. This was similar to the Muslim ceremony called *shirinbori* ('cutting the sweets') common throughout Central Asia and Afghanistan.[69]

Many Jewish ceremonies resembled those of their Muslim neighbours. The custom of decorating the bride's forehead with sequins is thought to hearken back to the fashions of the early nineteenth-century Qajar court. However, Uzbek and Tajik brides also share similar customs.[70] Other Jewish practices were unusual. For a year before the wedding, the groom's female relatives spent a great deal of effort pleasing the betrothed girl. Special gifts and trays of decorated food were sent to the bride on every religious holiday (with the exception of Rosh Hashana and Passover, as there was too much work for the women to complete). On Purim, a brightly painted white hen, with cloth 'shoes' was sent to the bride, and would remain with her until her first child was born. The hen was given to amuse the very young bride and her family.[71] It was treated somewhat like a pet, perhaps serving as a way for her to practice mothering skills.

[68] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 51-52.
[69] Ibid, 43-45.
[70] Ibid, 61-65.
[71] Ibid, 48-51.

A week before the wedding, the groom and his family would spend the night in the bride's home, and they would all attend Sabbath services together. On the night before the wedding, the henna ceremony was performed in the bride's house. This was similarly elaborate to the party held after the wedding in the groom's house. The religious ceremony itself was conducted in the bride's house, and then she would be led in a festive procession to the groom's residence. With the exception of the first two nights, the bride's mother would stay with her daughter and new in-laws during this week of wedding festivities.[72] Perhaps this was to ease her young daughter's transition. Aharon Bezalel recalls his older sister's wedding, and being invited to breakfast with her and her bridegroom.[73] "A tablecloth spread on the carpeted floor was set with a tray of fragrant, freshly baked bread and cups of sweet tea. I will never forget the cozy tranquility I felt in that room."[74] These rituals helped to keep a small community united, as the responsibility for the various ceremonies was shared. Many of the customs that the Jewish community performed were similar to those of the surrounding Muslim population.

Women's Experiences

While the entire Jewish community of Afghanistan voluntarily separated itself from the larger populace, this situation was far more extreme for women and children. They seldom left their courtyard - let alone the Jewish quarter.[75] Women did not visit their parents very frequently, and would only leave the *mahalla* or neighbourhood several times a year, generally to picnic or visit gardens especially in the days after Passover or Shavuot.[76] Erich Brauer describes the women that he interviewed in Jerusalem as very anxious.[77] However, they differed from Muslim women as they mixed freely with the men in their homes. In the streets, however, they wore a dark

[72] Ibid, 51, 67-8.

[73] While no date is provided, it is my estimation that this wedding would have occured in the 1920s or early 1930s, as the author is now an elderly man.

[74] Aharon Bezalel, "A Wedding in the Family: Childhood Memories" in ed. Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 122.

[75] Robinson, 28.

[76] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 95; and Brauer 1942, 137.

[77] Brauer 1942, 131.

blue *burqa* to avoid trouble.[78] At this time, Muslim women wore a white *burqa* so that the Jewish women, while veiled, were instantly recognizable, and thus very vulnerable. Muslim women also had a similarly circumscribed life, yet without the chronic fear of being attacked or kidnapped on the street under religious pretense.[79]

Jewish women's lives revolved around household chores performed communally in the courtyard, such as grinding flour, cooking, baking and washing, as well as spinning, sewing, embroidery, and knitting. They made objects for domestic purposes, and festive and ceremonial occasions; they especially concentrated on preparing their daughters' trousseaus. Women made clothing for themselves and their children as well as some items for the men and the family's linens including pillowcases, blankets, curtains, and assorted bags. Sewing was a social occasion especially in the preparations for Rosh Hashanah and Passover, when all family members received a new outfit, three months before a wedding, and when a woman was in the third month of her pregnancy.[80]

Several occupations were available to Jewish women in Afghanistan, they either made goods for outsiders or performed a role for the benefit of the Jewish community. The most common form of employment was the manufacturing of silk thread that would then be sold and sent to Persia. Perhaps women also engaged in other cottage industries, as did the Jews of Mashhad, who produced silk clothes for the Turkmen.[81] Arguably, the most interesting role was that of a *mashhade* or literally a hair comber. These women were beauticians and advisors who accompanied the bride at all times in the three days before her wedding, and helped her prepare physically and emotionally for this great change. They were skilled with their hands, yet the *mashhade*'s role was not limited to wedding preparations. She also delivered babies, took care of sick children, embroidered, spun, and wove cloth, and decorated the sugar cones that were

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[78] Rudolf Lowenthal, *The Jews of Bukhara* (Washington D.C., Central Asian Collectanea, 1961), 9.

[79] Brauer 1942, 132.

[80] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 34 and 95.

[81] Azariya Levy, "Azizallahoff-Levy Family – A History," chapter in Levy, 40-1.

an integral part of wedding ceremonies. A similar female role was also found in Jewish communities in Georgia, Yemen, and Cochin, India.[82]

The *mashhades* were often widows who had to support themselves. Poor widows would struggle with having enough to eat. Divorce was unheard of, and men would be publicly shamed or threatened with excommunication if they asked for one. Instead, and especially if no male children were born, they would take a second wife.[83] While this custom ended 1,000 years ago among the Ashkenazim, it remained an occasional practice into the twentieth century among Jews in the Muslim world.[84] As for women married unhappily, they normally suffered, but no change occurred. However, No'am Bar 'am-BenYossef writes "despite the absence of protected rights and independent means of sustenance, women generally had an honored position and influence in the family."[85] While such a statement is difficult to assess, it is certainly true that men would often travel for long amounts of time, leaving the women in charge of a female-centred household. This may have provided the women with more autonomy and control.

In many cases, women would give birth every year, and the infant mortality rate was very high – perhaps half of the infants did not survive. There appears to have been a very meagre tradition of indigenous medical practices, and most rituals were done solely to keep away evil spirits. When a woman discovered her pregnancy, she would invite guests over and have a ceremony conducted during which an amulet was created to preserve her until the birth of her infant.[86]

In the 1930s, children's lives were even more circumscribed than those of the adult women. In the 1940s, some boys who recently arrived in Jerusalem told Erich

[82] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 55.
[83] Brauer 1942, 132.
[84] In Israel, new immigrant Jewish men from Muslim countries are allowed to keep second wives they married before arrival, though they are forbidden from taking any more wives. This was especially common among Yemeni immigrants during the 1950s. See Sholom Barer, *The Magic Carpet* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952).
[85] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 25.
[86] Brauer 1942, 132.

Brauer that they would not even dare to go out of their courtyard for fear of the Muslim children who taunted and threw stones at them. Yet, their childhood occurred during a time of crisis for the community. Earlier generations were not as terrorized. One informant explained how her grandfather was taken north as a child. In the early years of the twentieth-century, he lived with his father, and accompanied him on trading missions, often into Russia, and once as far west as France. He spoke seven or eight languages and was educated in a traditional Jewish school. This man's son did not travel during his childhood, as he was born in 1935, after numerous restrictions commenced.[87]

Boys started their private, religious education at three or four years of age and could continue to fifteen or sixteen. They learned to read and translate the Bible, prayers, and the Mishna, as well as some rudimentary arithmetic. Upon completion of their education, the young men could read the weekly Torah portion. Until Amanullah's reign in the 1920s, Jewish girls received no education and remained illiterate. The present author did not hear of any girls who learned to read at home, though this occurred in many other communities. Instead, girls' primary tasks were assisting their mothers with household duties and childcare.[88]

Men's Lives

The structure of Afghan families was strongly patriarchal, and Kashani reports that until the 1940s, "the father was the sole arbiter whose word was law."[89] Perhaps more metaphorically revealing was the way food was portioned out at dinner.

> The men reclined against cushions placed on mattresses. The women sat opposite, on carpets but not on mattresses, a long tablecloth (*sofre*) separating them from the men. The food ... was brought by the women to the head of the household. He served and no one dared comment if he happened to skip anyone ... First to be served were the men, then the

[87] Interview with Shulamit Ambalu, London, 30 December 1998. Ms. Ambalu's father immigrated to Israel with his family in 1948.

[88] Ibid, 133-4.

[89] Kashani 1961, 25.

> sons, and only then the women and small children. A menstruating woman sat at some distance from the others, wearing special clothes and eating from separate utensils.[90]

All Jewish men prayed communally three times a day as religiously proscribed and socially enforced. For example, throughout the community's settlement in Herat,"[i]f, by chance, someone didn't come, he received a visit in order to find out why he was missing."[91] When praying, the men would remove their shoes, and sit on carpets or mats. Only in the 1920s were benches placed in the synagogue. After services, the men would form groups to study the Torah, Rashi, Talmud, and Kabbalah.[92] Seating was arranged by social standing, so that the most prominent members sat closest to the Torah scrolls.[93] When several additional synagogues were established, one of them was reserved for those who belonged to the highest social group.[94]

Communal Structures and Social Control

As seating in the synagogue demonstrates, the Afghanistani Jewish community was rigidly stratified, despite its tiny size. Each level was shaped by its group's origin and dialect. The top stratum was composed of Mashhadis who fled forcible conversion. They spoke a dialect of Persian called *Gilaki*, and became prominent merchants and rabbis. Curiously, the Mashhadis who left after 1839 were poorer; since they had little to lose, they risked the escape from Persia. The wealthier members of the community remained *Jadid al-Islam.*[95] In the middle of the social hierarchy in Afghanistan was the small indigenous community, and on the lowest rung were the poorest individuals who mainly came from Yazd, and spoke the Persian of that city. One of Herat's two Jewish schools was reserved for this group.[96]

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[90] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 37.
[91] Ibid,27.
[92] Kashani 1961, 25.
[93] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 27
[94] Bezalel 1999, 23.
[95] Levy, 10, and Patai 1997, 205.
[96] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 25; and Bezalel 1999, 23.

Internal communal affairs were organized by a *hevra*, a group composed of the heads of important families. They were responsible for educating the boys, assisting the poor, burying the dead, enforcing religious laws, and resolving conflicts.[97] Individuals could be punished for desecrating the Sabbath or other religious laws.[98] The community was led by the head rabbi, and in Herat, he came from the Garji family. In contrast to the dispute resolution of the Muslim majority, disagreements were never brought before governmental officials or judges. Instead, both sides were forced to accept the finality of the rabbi's ruling. This could include fines, and harsh physical punishments like the use of the *fallaq* or bastinado, which would be hit against the offender's feet. If an individual wanted to bring Jewish communal matters to the attention of the larger Muslim society, he was threatened with a type of excommunication.[99] This included being denied access to the synagogue, shunned by all members of the Jewish community, and *ipso facto* a loss of livelihood.[100]

Brauer describes the following case involving the death of a child. While playing, a twelve-year-old threw a rock at another boy, and killed him accidentally. The father of the dead child wanted to involve the Afghan authorities, but was convinced to let the *hevra* or communal council mediate. For his part, the father of the boy who threw the stone, a butcher, refused to pay the thousand rupee fine. Consequently, the father was excommunicated. "This ban deprived him of his very livelihood, for no Jew would buy meat from him, and he was eventually forced to submit."[101] These types of sanctions forced individuals to abide by the decisions of the *hevra* and rabbi. This prevented Muslim authorities from using these divisions to insist that the guilty party convert to Islam, as happened in Bukhara.[102]

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[97] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 17.
[98] Robinson 1953, 30.
[99] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 25; and Bezalel 1999, 20.
[100] Robinson, 30.
[101] Brauer 1942, p.135.
[102] See Burton for various instances of forcible conversion.

Peddlers and Merchants

In 1919, Amanullah banned the Jews from all occupations except trading. This author could not determine Amanullah's rationale for this decision, though it may have had something to do with regulating the position of Jews in society. Clearly, nationalist currents had not yet arrived, as it was still considered unseemly for Muslims to be engaged in middlemen pursuits. With the establishment of government monopoly companies by the mid-1930s, the Jewish community was prevented from trading.[103] Ultimately, these regulations led to the end of a Jewish presence in Afghanistan, as most of the community was involved in commerce.

Before delving into the policies of Muhammad Hashim Khan's regency, it is important to understand the economic activities of the Jewish community. The poorer members were peddlers who sold their goods in rural areas, and also served as intermediaries between the tribes, enabling nomadic groups to sometimes solve their conflicts peaceably. Members of the middle class were merchants who imported textiles and medicines, and exported skins, furs, and carpets.[104] They set up shop in the city bazaars or in caravanserais in the outlying areas. The Jews faced stiff competition from the Hindu community who pushed them out of changing money and the wholesale trade in medicines by the early twentieth century.[105] As a result, they diversified into shopkeepers, doctors, druggists, and distillers.[106]

With the advent of a system of government monopolies, Jews found it difficult to maintain their previous livelihood patterns. In order to survive, they learned new trades, becoming tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, tinsmiths, and tanners.[107] By 1944, the British reported that half were involved in retail sales, like selling cotton clothing,

[103] Landshut 1950a, 68.
[104] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 16.
[105] Fry, 236.
[106] Gregorian, 64-5.
[107] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 16.

tea, spices, and candy; one-quarter were small brokers or servants; five per cent owned land, mostly vineyards around Balkh; and twenty per cent were unemployed.[108]

The Jewish community in Afghanistan was founded and shaped by the exigencies of long-distance trade. Along with their Hindu counterparts, Jewish merchants reached remote regions and sold goods to feuding tribes. Often the Jewish traders would be the only ones allowed into disputed areas, as they were neutral and not attached to any tribal group. In order to provide for this economic niche, unusual domestic arrangements developed. Men would depart for long periods of time from Herat, as the journey would have involved too many risks for the entire family to take. After travelling along the caravan routes, they would live in smaller towns like Maimana and Qal'a Nau, in all-male Jewish caravanserais. They would remain there for much of the year, returning to the cities only occasionally. On the eve of Rosh Hashana and Passover, caravans would arrive at the gates of Herat bringing men home to their families.[109] However, some men only returned every few years for several months. There were even cases of men who left soon after marriage, and didn't return until grown sons came to bring them home.[110] In these settlements, the men cooked, ate, and prayed together.[111] As mentioned, a similar phenomenon was found among Hindus who also lived in all-male caravanserais. In Bukhara, Hindus traded tea and indigo from India, as well as local silk, cotton, rice and wheat. They also lent money especially to soliders.[112] The unusual demands of economic sufficieny in a niche reshaped the social and cultural norms for these entrepreneurial minorities.

Other communities found similar economic arrangements viable. Another religious minority, an Islamic sect called the Ibadi were settled in southern Algeria and Jerba, Tunisia, though the men were engaged as merchants in the northern part of these countries. Women were not allowed to accompany the men, who only returned home

[108] IOL L/PS/12/1660, 45. Note on the Jews of Afghanistan, 29 December 1944.
[109] Gorenberg, 49.
[110] Brauer 1942, 123-4.
[111] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 16.
[112] Vitaly Naumkin, *Bukhara: Caught in Time: Great Photographic Archives*. Compiled by Andrei G. Nedvetsky (Reading: Garnet, 1993), 59 and photograph 60.

for short periods of time, and then later to retire in old age. Walter Zenner describes them as "classic sojourners."[113] Other Jewish communities also followed similar domestic and economic arrangements.[114] Habbani Jews in the Yemen also engaged in regional commerce. All the men in this community were silversmiths who wandered between Aden and the edges of Wadi Hadramaut selling their jewellery. They would also come home only for Tishri (the month of holidays which commences with Rosh Hashanah, the new year) and Passover. In order to keep safe from harm while on the road, the Habbani formed alliances with local leaders and tribes.[115] Similar patterns of alliance were less formalized in Afghanistan, and consequently Jews were more endangered. For example, when an English visitor to Balkh asked Bukharan Jews about those in Afghanistan in 1880, they replied that: "Their condition is extremely unfavourable, since they are completely at the mercy of the numerous princes who deal with them as they please."[116] Despite this vulnerability, it is clear that relations were close with Turkmen tribes. This will be explored in the next section.

Itzhak Bezalel states that while the three communities of Bukharan, Afghanistani, and Mashhadi hidden Jews are all interconnected, the latter two groups are more closely linked through dialect and custom.[117] For example, Afghanistani and Mashhadi dialects of Judeo-Persian are far closer to each other, than either is to Bukharan Judeo-Tajik. This may be because the Bukharans were strongly influenced by Russian and Soviet linguistic policies. Perhaps the most detailed description of the all-male trading settlement comes from the memoirs of a crypto-Jew from Mashad. While Aqa Farajullah Nasrullayoff Livian (1874-1951) came from the *Jadid al-Islam* group known as *Talebin al-Islam*, (literally, students of Islam) his business experiences outside of

[113] Zenner 1991, 18.

[114] These practices extended to the Americas. In the United States, Ashkenazi immigrants engaged in long-distance trade and mercantile activity. For example, one of this author's more flamboyant relatives, Samuel "Navajo Sam" Dittenhoffer spoke the Navajo language fluently and was engaged in the rug trade in the 1880s.

[115] Laurence D. Loeb, "Folk Models of Habbani Ethnic Identity," in ed. Alex Weingrod, *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity: After the Ingathering* (London: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1985), 203-4.

[116] "Jews in Central Asia" in *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 October 1880, 10.

[117] Born to Herati immigrants in Jerusalem, Bezalel has trouble understanding the Bukharans' Judeo-Tajik while it is easy for him to communicate with the Mashhadis, as their Judeo-Persian dialect is much closer. Author's interview with Itzhak Bezalel, Jerusalem, 4 July 2001.

Mashhad were very similar to that of the members of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. It is striking to read Farajullah's description of the differences between the Herati and Mashhadi Jews: "The Jews of Herat enjoyed greater religious freedom than the Jadidim of Meshed and observed their feasts openly. They even discussed details of their customs with their non-Jewish neighbors."[118] In noting how allegedly different these two communities are their similarities shine through.

After finishing primary school, Farajullah went with his older brother 'Abdallah to Deregez, 130 kilometres northwest of Mashhad along what is now the border with Turkmenistan. Upon arrival, he found that the Jadidim lived in their stores, sleeping, cooking, and eating there. He was scandalized to learn that the Jadidi men did not have a synagogue, observe the Sabbath, or follow *kashrut* (dietary laws) in Deregez.[119] As the youngest in his extended family, Farajullah was in charge of all of the domestic tasks. He prepared the tea, and all of the meals, drew water five to six times a day, bought firewood, and chopped it into smaller pieces. A few years before his death, Aqa Farajullah recalled the difficult labour involved. He wrote:

> [E]arly in the morning, before the grown-ups woke up, I had to get up and prepare hot water and set the table for breakfast, so that when the grown-ups got up, everything should be ready. Even in the evening, I had to prepare the sleeping places of the grown-ups (in those days they slept on the floor), and in the morning I had to gather them. All day long I had to prepare, according to their instructions, all kinds of food. I also had to clean the store. All this was too much for a child of twelve or thirteen, so that I never slept enough.[120]

Farajullah was so upset by the desecration of the Sabbath that he asked the six store owners around his uncle's location if they would allow him to light and put out the fire on the Sabbath, so that he would be the only one to break that commandment.

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[118] Patai 1997, 189.
[119] Ibid, 113.
[120] Ibid, 123.

In adulthood, Farajullah was responsible for creating a Halachically observant Jewish community in Deregez. Farajullah describes how he learned the *shehita* (kosher butchering) laws in the year that he stayed in Mashhad to be married. Upon return to Deregez, he started a campaign to encourage *kashrut*, and religious observance:

> And to those who ate kosher meat, we said if they go to the houses of people who do not eat kosher meat, they should not only not eat there, but should not even drink water or tea, and should tell them that since their dishes are not kosher, 'we cannot drink.' In this manner it took six months until all the Jews in Deregez ate kosher, in every respect, had kosher utensils, and were praying morning and evening.[121]

After this occurred, men brought their families to join them, thus changing the character of the Jewish trading post to a permanent, more rounded community. In three years, (apparently around the time of World War I) fifty Jadidi families lived in Deregez, founded two synagogues with Torah scrolls and purchased land for a Jewish cemetery.[122] A permanent settlement would only be established after a *Beit-Din* (law court), *mikvah* (ritual bath), *Hevrah Kadishah* (burial society), and graveyard were prepared, so that all aspects of religious observance were maintained.[123]

Clearly, the religious environment of Deregez was increasingly hospitable as warm relations were forged with the Turkman population, and the Russians also encouraged regional trade. A similar phenomenon happened with Jadidi settlements in the Turkmen areas of Marv, Sarakhs, Kaakhka, and Ashkabad.[124] This may be similar to the population shift that also occurred in northern Afghanistan when the Jewish population in towns like Andkhoi and Maimana seems to have grown.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, extending up to the late 1940s, the primary mode of transportation along this part of the Silk Road continued to be by

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[121] Ibid, 136.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Bezalel 1999, 22.
[124] Azaria Levy, "The Jews of Mashad in the Early Twentieth Century," chapter in Levy, 7.

armed caravan, as it was too dangerous to attempt more solitary journeys.[125] In 1880, the *Jewish Chronicle* published a fascinating description of a caravan that arrived in Balkh from the city of Bukhara. Ninety Jews arrived with 200 camels loaded mainly with silk clothing and artwork. Several men "were armed to the teeth to protect them from the raids of marauding Turkomans." These Bukharan Jews were described as men:

> of handsome appearance, and of such great stature, that compared with Europeans ... they might be looked upon as giants. They are extremely warlike, and in their journeys have had many a victorious encounter with the Turkomans, many of whom they have caused to bite the dust. On other occasions they had been less successful.[126]

This was extremely unusual, as in Persian or Bukharan territory Jews would not have been allowed to carry weapons, as stipulated under the Pact of 'Umar. Outside of settled areas, different rules clearly applied. Aqa Farajullah provides another example of the fortifications a convoy of merchandise would have to prepare. He says that a caravan travelling from Bukhara would take six months to arrive in Mashhad, and would travel with three to four hundred camels and one hundred armed guards to protect the shipment. Farajullah states that the leader of the caravan had to be a Turkman who was "known and reliable and accepted by the merchants."[127] If a caravan arrived at its destination intact, the merchandise would be sold for no less than three times its original price because of all of the dangers and accompanying cost inherent in its transport. Because of these circumstances, Jewish merchants would divide up their consignments, and send them in three separate caravans with the hope that at least one made the journey safely.[128] However, in Khorasan, Turkmen tribes did not attack Jadidi caravans, as they paid protection money to the tribal chieftains.[129] A Persian Jewish merchant named N. Mashiah describes a raid upon an Afghan town near the Indian border. While this is different from a raid on a caravan, it certainly invokes a sense of these attacks. "All of a sudden, hordes of riders came out of the hill area and

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[125] Gregorian, 367.

[126] "Jews in Central Asia," *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 October 1880, 10.

[127] Patai, 124.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Azaria Levy, "Evidence and Documents Concerning the History of the Jews of Mashad," 14 and "The Jews of Mashad in the Early Twentieth Century," 2, chapters in Levy.

flooded the town. They were brave soldiers ... and in the space of a short time they simply swept up the place and left it empty."[130]

Inter-Communal Ties: The Turkman-Jewish Relationship

"[I]s it not striking that Jews have received the most powerful protection among the wild inhabitants of the desert?"[131]

The relationship between Turkmen and Jews were particularly warm, and often the two communities worked in alliance. For example, while the Mashhadi *anusim* or forcible converts to Islam identified themselves as Muslim to the Russians, with the Turkmen, they identified themselves and were accepted as Jews.[132] Almost immediately after *Allah Daad* in 1839, *anusim* joined Turkmen tribes and fought against the Persians and Bukharans. Joining Turkmen tribes may have been the only way to extracate themselves from the difficulties of dhimmitude, and an outlet for their anger after the mass forcible conversion. When forces from Khiva were in battle, it was reported that one could hear a Hebrew war cry *Rabone Shel Olam*! (Lord of the world), along with that of the Turkman war cry, *Serenk*! (brave)." Joseph Wolff, a former German Jew turned Christian missionary and ardent traveller, was struck by the close bond between the Turkmen and the Jews during the 1830s and 40s. He writes that the Jews "who are tyrannized over at Bokara and Persia, fly to the inhabitants of the desert, at Mowr, Sarakhs, Akhaul, and to the Hazarah in Affghanistaun."[133] In this way, they were able to find protection and relief among groups who practiced Islam in a more tolerant manner.[134] Sprinkled throughout Aqa Farajullah's memoir are references to the close ties he enjoyed with individual Turkmen. On several occasions, and sometimes at great personal risk, his life was saved through the intervention of

[130] A. Avihail and A. Brin, eds. *The Lost Tribes in Assyria* (Jerusalem: Amishav, 1985), 29-31.
[131] Wolff 1969, 115.
[132] Azaria Levy, "The Jews of Mashad in the Early Twentieth Century," in *The Jews of Mashad* (Jerusalem: published privately, 1998), 6-7.
[133] Joseph Wolff, *A Mission to Bokhara*, ed. Guy Wint (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969),115. (Spelling remains as in the original.)
[134] Similarly, runaway slaves would also join Native American tribes in the southern part of the United States.

Turkmen friends. When he was a youth, a Turkman healer saved him from a puzzling, deadly malady, and later on Turkmen guides smuggled him out of Turkestan as the Bolsheviks seized power.[135]

Supplementing individual acts of kindness and bravery were decisions taken by the Turkman community as a whole. In 1902, when the Russians wanted to banish Jewish immigrants from *Turkestan krai*, 800 leaders and dignitaries of Turkmen tribes in Ashkabad petitioned the Russians to allow the Jews to stay. Previously, the Russians had encouraged Baha'i and Jadid immigration as a way to stimulate the economy, as both groups were involved in trade and commerce. In this respect, Russian aims may have been similar to those of Nadir Shah. Yet, at the end of the nineteenth-century, anti-Semitism was rife in the empire. Not inaccurately, the Russians accused the Jadidis of being Jews posing as Muslims. Ultimately, the Turkman petition was unsuccessful, though so was the Russian policy. By 1910, Jews were allowed to live only in the underdeveloped border areas. However, these restrictions soon loosened to include Kokand, Margilan, and even Samarkand, the veritable centre of regional development.[136]

The Mashhadi *anusim* directed much of their economic activity towards supplying Turkmen tastes. They made silk clothing in their homes, and traded many items including: lambskin, sheep's wool, carpets, spices, dyes, and precious stones.[137] Azaria Levy describes how his grandfather bought carpets woven by the women and karakul skins from the Turkmen. Once the skins arrived in Mashhad they were embroidered and later sold as far away as Moscow, Nijni-Novgorod, and Istanbul.[138] Central Asian Jews also provided a market for Turkman-grown cotton. To facilitate this relationship, Patai explains that *anusim* living in Merv would loan the Turkmen money during the

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[135] Patai 1997, 114.

[136] Azaria Levy, "The Jews of Mashad in the Early Twenteth Century," chapter in Levy, 2 and 12, and *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1940), s.v. "Bokhara," by Anatol Safanov. For more detailed information, see Michael Zand, "Les Yahudi de Boukhara" *Regards* 297(1992): 23-25; and 298 (1992): 15-18.

[137] Azaria Levy, "The Jews of Mashad in the Early Twenteth Century," chapter in Levy, 2.

[138] Azaria Levy, "The Azizallahoff-Levy Family – A History," chapter in Levy, 2 and 40.

sowing season, with the agreement that they would receive some of the crop at harvest time.[139] These kinds of arrangements were common throughout the region.[140]

While the most detailed information is available for the Mashhadis, similar patterns occurred in Afghanistan, especially in the northern rim. After the Russian Revolution, thousands of Turkmen found refuge in Afghanistan, bringing seventy-five per cent of the total karakul stock in the Soviet-controlled area with them.[141] After a few years, the skins of karakul lambs became Afghanistan's most important source of foreign earnings. Jewish traders played a predominant role, working in conjunction with Turkmen producers to supply the international market. In 1941, a British businessman wrote a confidential and detailed note to his government describing the workings of the karakul skin trade. He explained the "very great confidence [that] existed between the Turkmens and the Oriental Jews ... made credit deals possible." He said that before the monopoly system that operated from 1933-1948, everyone made the same rate of profit or felt the same loss. This included the "small sheep-owner, the small dealer in Turkestan, the big Afghan dealer and the Indian or Oriental [Jewish] dealer in Peshawar and London..."[142] Close business connections and trust between the Turkmen and Jewish communities helped to strengthen the economy from north-eastern Persia to Central Asia and Afghanistan, and provided mutual protection for both groups.

International Connections through Trade

International trade can be traced to the late eighteenth century among the Jews of Bukhara. It may have started earlier, though no records are extant before this time.[143] It seems likely that the Jewish population, especially in the northern rim of

[139] Patai 1997, 114.

[140] See also Max Vekselman, "The Development of Economic Activity of Bukharan Jews in Central Asia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" in ed. Benjamin Pinkus, *Shvut: Studies in Russian and East European Jewish History* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Publishers, 1995): 63-79.

[141] PRO FO 371/18,256, Weekly Summary no.42, 15 October 1934 , 413.

[142] IOL R/12/160, "Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the Economic Activities of the Afghan Bank," 7.

[143] Burton, 43 and 55.

Afghanistan, grew as a result of these journeys, as more opportunities for trade became available, and men moved in from the Central Asian khanates. In addition to dwelling in remote areas, Jewish men in north-eastern Persia, Bukhara, and Afghanistan would go on long trading journeys to India, Siberia, Russia, and even into Western Europe. Through the trade in textiles, carpets, and especially karakul, they formed business ties with distant places.[144] The strength of the Jewish merchants lay in having a network of connections throughout the Russian and British empires. Sometimes, members of a family would each live in a different city along the route of the goods traded. Azaria Levy explains how his family conducted business. "One would buy merchandise, [and] send it to a brother in another town, who would, in turn, buy local merchandise and send it to the others, each living in a different town."[145] Some families maintained offices in Kabul, Peshawar, and London in the 1930s, while others spread out to Leipzig (before the rise of Nazi Germany)[146] and New York, or Jerusalem and Bombay, with each male relative managing a part of the trade for the benefit of all. Even today, some Mashhadi and Afghanistani families follow these patterns. Notably, they have become involved in the coloured gem trade and have offices in Tel Aviv, New York, and Bangkok.[147]

As a result, the community's isolation eased considerably. Merchants who settled in India or the west forged links to Jewish communities and the burgeoning Zionist movement in India, Britain, France and Palestine. Though previously overlooked by other scholars, a large cache of documents from these networks still exists. The letters and telegrams shed light on the Jewish community's experiences and troubles in the 1930s and 1940s. The Mirzoeff family may serve as an example. In the 1930s, G. Mirzoeff owned a business in Brickhill Lane, and was president of the Boukharian Jews' Association of London. His brother, Y.H. Mirzoeff, lived in Peshawar and exported furs, skins, and carpets. Y.H. learned of events in Afghanistan, and

[144] Hanegbi and Yaniv, 29.
[145] Azaria Levy, "The Azizallahoff-Levy Family - A History," chapter in Levy, 42.
[146] Most furriers in Leipzig were Jewish between 1800 and the 1930s. Zenner, 97.
[147] Tibor Krausz, "The Colors of Money," *The Jerusalem Report*, 13 August 2001, 30-35.

transmitted letters and money from London to the Bukharan refugees in Kabul.[148] For example, on 25 October 1935, Y.H. Mirzoeff wrote the Joint Foreign Committee at the Board of Deputies and asked why Bukharan Jews in Kabul still had not received immigration certificates for Palestine.[149] Correspondence from these merchants then reached the Jewish Agency (*Sochnut*), and the British Foreign and India Offices. In French archives one finds a similar trail of documents through Iran. Jadidim communicated with Bukharan Jewish refugees in Mashhad, who then transmitted information to the Alliance Israëlite Universelle director in Teheran. He in turn informed Paris. Once the director of the Alliance was notified, he contacted the Board of Deputies in London. Similar channels ran to Jerusalem, and have been examined in detail by Israeli scholars.[150] The communication between Jewish communities in Palestine and the Jewish Agency have been researched, however, the patterns of correspondence among Mizrahim settled in the west are almost unknown.

After 1917, the business climate of Central Asia changed dramatically. The Russian Revolution made trade and travel within the burgeoning Soviet Union nearly impossible. Many fortunes based on Central Asian trade disappeared. Prominent Afghanistani Jewish merchants who owned large herds of cattle and warehouses in Russian territory lost all of their capital. The community suddenly became much poorer, and its situation was aggravated by new trade restrictions within Afghanistan.[151] However, difficulties were temporarily eased by the arrival of Turkmen refugees with their karakul flocks in the early 1920s. When the Turkmen shepherds crossed from Soviet to Afghan territory, they brought their flocks with them, which soon became Afghanistan's primary means of acquiring hard currency. Corresponding to this change, Afghanistani Jews also replaced their Bukharan co-religionists as the primary traders in karakul skins.[152]

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[148] See BoD, ACC/3121/E2/128.

[149] BoD ACC/3121/C11/12/3, Y.H. Mirzoeff (Peshawar) to Joint Foreign Committee (London), 25 October 1935.

[150] See appendix one for a diagram of Jewish patterns of correspondence during the 1930s.

[151] Brauer 1942, 125; Raphael Patai, *Tents of Jacob* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1971), 254.

[152] Bezalel in ed. Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 21, and Carl Alpert, "Les Derniers Juifs d'Afghanistan" in *Tribune Juive*, no. 639, 26 September – 2 October 1980, 17-8.

Despite male involvement in long-distance trade, in many respects, Jews in Afghanistan were extremely isolated from other Jewish communities. Related to the hidden Jews in Mashhad, they continued to resemble them after returning to an open practice of Judaism. They received no *shalihot* (emissaries from the Land of Israel), and were the only country where *Mizrahim* did not maintain ties to either Moses Montefiore or the Alliance Israëlite Universelle. This contrasts greatly with the Bukharan experience. After the Russian conquest, the Bukharan Jews were more exposed to modernisation and Westernisation. Afghanistan's Jewish community first made indirect contact with Zionist organisations in the 1920s, almost 130 years after a pivotal *shaliah* arrived in Bukhara.[153] Indeed, when the Board of Deputies first learned of their existence, they were unsure as to whether Jews in Afghanistan still veiled their religion, as did the Mashhadi Jadidim.[154]

The proceeding chapter steps back in time to examine Afghanistan's history from a general perspective. As works on the Jewish community generally present wider trends in Afghanistani history in a cursory manner, the following section seeks to rectify these discrepancies.

[153] Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 22; Kashani 1961, 25; Burton, 48.
[154] See BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1 and 2.

Chapter Three:
Outline of the Political and Economic History of Afghanistan: (1747-1933)

Synopsis

This chapter surveys the general history of Afghanistan from the middle of the eighteenth century to the early 1930s in order to provide a further context for the Jewish experience. It commences with a sketch of Afghanistan's foundation and both Anglo-Afghan Wars. The reign of 'Abd al-Rahman Khan (r.1880-1901), is explored in more detail, showing how his personal ruthlessness shattered Afghanistan's fragile ethnic mosaic. Each early twentieth-century ruler's policies are discussed both in outline, and in relation to Afghanistan's minority communities. A period of restoration under Habibullah Khan (r.1901-1919) was followed by Amanullah's reforms (r.1919- January 1929) and then the revolt that led to the ten-month anarchical rule of Habibullah Kalakani (Bacha-i Saqao). Finally the rise of Muhammad Nadir Shah (r. October 1929-1933) and development of his economic policies are presented. In particular, his foundation of a monopolisation system is analysed. It had severe consequences for the Jewish and Hindu communities, as well as Muslim refugees in the country's northern tier.

Afghanistan's Foundation

The modern territory known as Afghanistan was formed in 1747 when the Sunni ruler of Persia, Nadir Shah Afshari, was assassinated. His career, "transient but bloody" as Lee calls it, definitively ended the Safavid Empire. In its wake, a far weaker Qajar dynasty eventually emerged which reigned over a smaller Persia.[1] Ahmad Khan,

[1] Lee, xiii.

treasurer to Nadir Shah, was able to abscond undetected with a considerable part of the late ruler's wealth. Under Ahmad's leadership, the 'Abdali Pashtun tribe then was able to cut its ties to Persia. After gaining Kandahar, he declared an independent Afghan kingdom.[2] Ahmad claimed a significant part of Khorasan, sought to emulate Nadir's conquests north of the Hindu Kush, capturing the Punjab, Kashmir and Multan.[3]

While the new government mixed the administrative structures of the Persian and Mughal empires, the system was saturated by what Gregorian calls "the Afghan tribal-feudal socio-economic framework."[4] The administrators were various tribal chiefs, and the ruler exercised only a limited degree of control. Due to these limitations of centralised power, Gregorian argues that Ahmad Shah's primary failure was the inability to develop an urban economy separate from the power of the tribes. The Afghan kingdom was also unable to shape a monarchy that maintained centralised control.[5] This fundamental inconsistency, often seen as a weakness, continued to plague Afghanistan for many years to come, and placed particular burdens on the non-Pashtun urban dwellers. In many other situations, urban merchants would act as agents of change, yet in Afghanistan the elites continued older nomadic, pastoral patterns. Meanwhile, the city merchants were often members of both ethnic and religious minorities, and therefore unable to assume leadership roles.[6]

The early nineteenth-century was characterized by war, internecine strife, lack of centralized power, and dangerous roads, all of which restricted trade. In 1809, the British emissary to Shah Shuja's court, Mountstuart Elphinstone wrote,

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[2] Gregorian, 46.
[3] Lee, 83.
[4] Gregorian, 47.
[5] Ibid, 49.
[6] See for example, Christine Dobbin, *Asian Entrepreneurial Minorities: Conjoint Communities in the Making of the World-Economy, 1570-1940* (Richmond: Curzon, 1996).

> The long civil wars have occasioned a great decline of commerce, by rendering the roads unsafe, and exposing whole caravans to be plundered; ... otherwise the situation of Caubul, between India, Persia, Tartary, and Belochestaun, together with the possession of Cashmeer, would not fail to give it great advantages.[7]

Prices clearly show the insecurity of trade routes. In the early nineteenth-century, Indian commodities were 200% more expensive in Kabul than on the subcontinent.[8] Staple agricultural products also exhibited dramatic shifts. By the 1830s, trade between India and Central Asia was severely disrupted.[9] The vast majority of inhabitants suffered greatly from fluctuating food prices. These conditions encouraged newly settled groups to return to nomadism. While the unstable economic situation affected the entire society, traders and merchants were particularly hard hit.

The First Anglo-Afghan War: Encountering the British Empire

During the early nineteenth-century, but particularly during the 1830s, Britain became increasingly interested in Central Asia, as the Czarist Empire took steppe land and Uzbek khanates in quick succession. Britain worried about the Russian threat to India, and the Government of India chose to support Afghanistan's ruler over the shah of Persia.[10] Britain felt that the creation of a buffer state might ease tensions between the two great powers. With this in mind, the British government started "a policy of destabilization" hoping to place a puppet monarch Shah Shuja' (r. 1803-1810 and 1839-1842) of the Sadoza'i dynasty, on the Afghan throne.[11] While the British were wooing Shah Shuja, the stated cause of their intervention dissolved when Persian forces withdrew from Herat.[12] Nonetheless, in November 1838, 21,000 British and Indian

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[7] Elphinstone, 256; and W. K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia* (London: Oxford University Press), 79.

[8] Gregorian, 56 note.

[9] Ibid, 59.

[10] Lee, xiv. Between 1747-1818 (and also 1839-1842), Afghan rulers were called 'Shah.' Dost Muhammad changed the title to 'Khan,' which remained until 1926, when Amanullah adopted the term Shah. (Adamec 1974, 267, and personal correspondence with May Schinasi, 17 April 2003.)

[11] Yarshater, Ehsan, ed. *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), s.v. "Afghanistan x. Political History," by D. Balland, 549.

[12] Gregorian, 100.

troops began to march northward.[13] Kandahar fell in April 1839, and Kabul in August.[14] By the summer of 1839, the British also concluded a treaty with Shah Kamran, the ruler of Herat, bringing it under British influence. As they marched into eastern Afghanistan, and commenced the First Anglo-Afghan War, the Russians also attacked Khiva so that British influence would not spread further northward.[15] While at first the British appeared successful, the war quickly turned into a calamity.[16] In the retreat from Kabul, during the winter of 1841-2, the entire British force of 16,000 was annihilated.[17] In April 1842, after a three-year rule, Shah Shujá was killed as well.[18]

Dost Muhammad Khan: Consolidating Afghanistan's Borders

On December 21, 1842, Dost Muhammad Khan, (r.1819-1839 and 1842-1863) returned to Kabul, and regained his throne.[19] Seven years later, he entered into an alliance with Britain, after giving up his goal of recapturing Peshawar and other parts of India. During the Indian Mutiny of 1857, he remained neutral, despite many calls for Muslim assistance. Between 1850 and 1863, the amir shifted direction, and consolidated Afghanistan's borders, which have remained fundamentally constant up to the present. In the 1850s, he annexed the land between the Hindu Kush and the Amu Darya.[20] He took Balkh in 1850, and Khulm, Kunduz, and Badakhshan in 1855, and the political power of these northern khanates quickly dissolved.[21] In 1855, Dost Muhammad also captured Kandahar.

On the economic front, Dost Muhammad did not try to shift Afghanistan's feudal system to gain more revenue. Rather, he demanded more taxes from merchants, especially Hindus. They had to pay 300,000 rupees for his war effort. All *dhimmis*,

[13] Lesley Hall, *A Brief Guide to Sources for the Study of Afghanistan in the Indian Office Records* (London: India Office Library and Records, 1981), 10.
[14] Balland in Yarshater, 549.
[15] Gregorian, 100-1.
[16] Balland in Yarshater, 549 and 551.
[17] Gregorian, 101.
[18] Adamec 1974, 267; and Balland in Yarshater, 551.
[19] Adamec, *Dictionary of Afghan Wars*, 1996, 252; and Balland in Yarshater, 549.
[20] Balland, 551.
[21] Gregorian, 82.

including Jews and Armenians, were required to pay the *jizya* two years in advance, and during times of emergency, merchants were forced to provide Dost Muhammad large "loans." These policies squeezed all the economic potential from the urban areas. Minority relations were further strained when Dost Muhammad took the lands of the Hazaras. The occupation of the Hazarajat fanned Sunni hatred towards this Shi'i community, as it was couched in a religious context.[22]

Shi'i Muslims, especially Hazaras and poor Badakhshanis, were extremely vulnerable to be captured as slaves, as they were viewed as non-believers and heretics. Turkmen would seize those travelling on the caravan routes between Khorasan and Bukhara. Also, rulers would obtain extra income through ransoming captives or selling them as slaves. Many areas became depopulated due to wars, ineffective resource management, and terrible public health. Life spans were short, children often died, and diseases spread quickly through the weakened populace.[23] It is interesting to note that Jews were not enslaved by Uzbek or Turkmen slave traders because Muslims would not buy them.[24] This left them free to interact with slave trading groups. For example, the community in Panjdeh even acted as intermediaries who paid off the ransoms of those enslaved.[25] The First Anglo-Afghan War shifted the way the populace regarded outsiders. They were now viewed with far more suspicion, and these fears were confirmed in the next war.

Second Anglo-Afghan War: Limiting Afghanistan's Independence

The Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-79) dominated Shir Ali Khan's reign. Worried about Russian gains in Central Asia, Shir Ali asked the British for military assistance. Yet, he received no guarantee against Russian attack. Czarist officials were far more forthcoming, and one General Stolietoff unexpectedly arrived in Kabul on 22

[22] Ibid, 77 and 80.

[23] Gregorian, 139; Azaria Levy, "Evidence and Documents Councerning the History of the Jews of Mashad," chapter in Levy, 6; Lee,166 note.

[24] Rudolf Lowenthal 1961, 9.

[25] Lee, 462, ft. 68.

July 1878 ready to sign an alliance.[26] This turn of events alarmed the British, who feared that India's "Scientific Frontier" would be compromised. General Neville Chamberlain was dispatched in response to the Russian envoy's arrival. However, the general and his escort of 1,000 troops were not allowed into Afghanistan. Lord Lytton, viceroy of India, therefore declared war on 21 November 1878.[27] Shir Ali hoped to receive Russian assistance and fled north. He was bitterly disappointed and died in Mazar-i-Sharif on 21 February 1879.[28] The British recognised his son, after Yaqub Khan signed the Treaty of Gandamak in May 1879, which agreed to allow the viceroy of India control Afghanistan's foreign affairs. This was a key provision of the tethered relationship between Britain and Afghanistan for the next forty years.[29] British troops arrived in Kabul on 24 July 1879, but six weeks later, their envoy, Louis Cavagnari, and his staff, were all killed. At this juncture, Yaqub Khan faced challenges to his rule from his brother Muhammad Ayub Khan, who destroyed 3,000 British soliders in the Battle of Maiwand, and his cousin, 'Abd al-Rahman Khan, who just returned from a twelve-year exile in Central Asia. Fearful of another massacre, the British backed down, and on 22 July 1880, they declared 'Abd al-Rahman the rightful amir, after he accepted British custody of Afghanistan's foreign affairs.[30] This enabled the British forces to leave safely while retaining external control.

Shattering Afghanistan's Ethnic Mosaic: The Rule of the 'Iron Amir'

As discussed above, both 'Abd al-Rahman Khan and his son Habibullah Khan did not direct Afghanistan's foreign policies. All decisions about diplomacy and trade, especially with Russia, went through Delhi. In practice, this meant that Afghanistan maintained isolationism as an active policy. Afghanistan was a highly unusual client state, with gradations of British control. These ranged from fully independent internal

[26] Ludwig Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* (Metuchen N.J.: Scarecrow, 1991), 33.
[27] Adamec 1996, 198 and 202.
[28] Adamec 1991, 33.
[29] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part I, 1747-1919*, 6; and Gregorian, 114-5.
[30] Adamec 1996, 8 and 202; Adamec 1991, 17 and 34; and Balland in Yarshater, 553.

policies, to completely dependent foreign policies.[31] Documents of the time confirm that in the 1930s and 40s, Great Britain saw 'Abd al-Rahman's rule as one which preserved "the peace of Central Asia for close on 40 years, and permitted the balance of power between Russia and Great Britain gradually to find equilibrium on the northern frontiers of Afghanistan."[32] However, recent historians see the British manoeuvres in the 'Great Game' as highly destructive for Afghanistan's future development. As Senzil Nawid says the two nineteenth-century Anglo-Afghan wars, coupled with British control of foreign policy from 1878-1919, prevented contact with other countries and this isolation "reinforced the 'inward-looking' nature of Afghan society and made it more resistant to change."[33]

'Abd al-Rahman was the only ruler in the nineteenth or indeed most of the twentieth-century who did not rely upon a religious seal of approval to rule, but rather silenced all opposition with his brutality. His reign produced a series of atrocities, details of which would even shock an audience inured to modern examples of genocide. Throughout his rule, 'Abd al-Rahman sought to consolidate his territory. In 1881, he captured Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat. He then turned to dominating northern Afghanistan, including Maimana in 1884. While he was brutal to all of his subjects, those who were not Sunni fared the worst. The conquests of the Shi'i Hazarajat (1891-93) and pagan 'Kafiristan' (1896) confirm this.[34] Many Hazaras were enslaved or exiled, and the members of the non-Islamic indigenous group known as the 'Kafirs' were all forced to convert to Sunni Islam. Their country was renamed 'Nuristan' as Islam had "enlightened" them.[35] The amir's persecution of Shi'i communities, including the Qizilbash brought him to the verge of war with Persia as thousands fled into Khorasan.[36]

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[31] Gregorian, 117.

[32] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part I, 1747*-1919, 7.

[33] Senzil K. Nawid, *Religious Response to Social Change in Afghanistan 1919-29: King Aman-Allah and the Afghan Ulama* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1999), xviii.

[34] Adamec 1996, 8; and Balland in Yarshater, 553.

[35] Balland in Yarshater, 553.

[36] Lee, 582.

J.L. Lee provides a voiciferous critique of 'Abd al-Rahman's rule. He argues that 'Abd al-Rahman's rule was disastrous, and "atrocities dominate the folk memories."[37] Lee estimates that "as many as 100,000 persons [were] judicially executed, whilst hundreds of thousands more perished from hunger, forced migrations, epidemics, or died as a result of numerous campaigns."[38] 'Abd al-Rahman's most important legacy may have been that of ethnic and cultural subjugation. In fact, Lee says that one cannot understand Afghanistan's modern strife without examining 'Abd al-Rahman's crimes against his people, as the basis of inter-ethnic hatred was sown at this time. Lee also blames the British who could not acknowledge the depths of the amir's oppression. He states that 'Abd al-Rahman never would have ruled for over twenty years without the "regular and copious infusions of military equipment and financial aid from Britain."[39]

Trade between northern Afghanistan and Russian-dominated Central Asia declined from 1889 until 1896 when it virtually stopped. This situation only improved after the 'Iron' Amir's death in 1901. In the 1890s, 'Abd al-Rahman Khan closed the Russian border. The amir saw economic underdevelopment as a way to maintain political autonomy. If Afghanistan grew wealthy through trade, then it might attract more foreign interest and greater colonial intervention. As such, he preferred a poor, but independent state.[40] Merchants throughout the country, and especially in Balkh province, were greatly handicapped as 'Abd al-Rahman redirected trade south through Afghanistan's three main cities. Lee writes that

> The movement of people within, to and from Afghan Turkistan was severely restricted. ... Shops were sequestered, the most lucrative products, such as karakul skins, pistachios, raisins, grain, sheep and cattle, were nationalized and monopolies in individual commodities sold off to the highest bidder.[41]

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[37] Lee, xxvi.
[38] Ibid, xxii-xxvi.
[39] Ibid, 543-44, 563, and 599.
[40] Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan, 1900-1923: A Diplomatic History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9.
[41] Lee, 561-2.

Similarly, the Encyclopedia Iranica argues that a far-reaching state monopoly controlled most of Afghanistan's foreign and domestic trade.[42] Consequently, all trade ventures were impeded.[43] Since these economic policies were accompanied by extreme measures against the populace, the consequences were dire. While monopolisation policies from the 1920s to the 1940s particularly harmed some segments of Afghanistani society, especially economic minorities, the destruction never reached the proportions of 'Abd al-Rahman's rule.

Negotiating 'Abd al-Rahman's Rule: The Challenges to the Jewish Community

As the Jewish community was politically defenceless, and the main occupations of its members were derived from trading opportunities, many fled north. They desired greater economic and personal freedoms which the Russians offered at the beginning of their rule, especially as the economic restrictions, trade monopoly, and widespread repression of 'Abd al-Rahman's rule were simply too great to overcome.[44] While paltry, some documentation about Jewish communal life under 'Abd al-Rahman remains. In one account published in 1892-93 to justify his reign as an Islamic monarch, the suppression of the sale of alcohol in Kabul is discussed. Gul Muhammad Khan writes that before wine was openly sold in the market, but "now the Jewish people have fled, and the drinking of wine is forbidden to the extent that it is not even available for medical purposes."[45] A similar event occurred in 1944, when many Jewish men were arrested in Kabul for producing alcohol. (See chapter 6.) This earlier reference certainly suggests that the Jewish population was engaged in producing wine, and that their total population declined during 'Abd al-Rahman's rule.

Foreign rulers also interceded on behalf of the Jewish community, protesting the restrictions on their movements. Fayz Muhammad Katib, the scribe and historian to the

[42]Balland, 553.
[43] Lee, 596.
[44] Azaria Levy, "The Jews of Mashhad in the Early Twentieth Century," chapter in Levy, 8.
[45] Gul Muhammad Khan Muhammadza'i, *Risalah-yi Maw'izah* (Kabul: 1310 AH), 9. I am grateful to Amin Tarzi for sharing this valuable source and the following one with me; and to Jakob Rigi for his translation.

courts of Habibullah and Amanullah Khan, discusses a letter received on 23 May 1887 or 1888 from 'Ali Khanov, the Hakim of Marv, to Qazi Sa'ad al-Din Khan, the Hakim of Herat. It includes a complaint from the Jews of Marv who received a letter from their co-religionists in Herat. They claimed that the Herati ruler gave orders that Jews "in Russian territory must return to their homes within two months. Otherwise all of their property will be confiscated, their families will be deported, and their houses looted and destroyed." 'Ali Khanov says that: "If this is true, it is a very ugly way to rule your country." Sa'ad al-Din sent a reply saying: "the assertion is a lie and a lie is like a lamp without light." He said that those travelling to Russia or Persia must have a "ticket" [English word used] or a pass. "This way, if something happens to them in a foreign land, the state will be able to investigate. ... The document is for their own safety. ...The state is not greedy for anyone's property."[46]

This appears to be the beginning of a rudimentary passport system. Gregorian states that under 'Abd al-Rahman Khan, freedom of movement was restricted to increase his power, generate revenue for his personal coffers, and strengten security. Officially, all people needed permission to travel with documents for internal and external journeys. For example, the residents of Kabul had to obtain permission and pay for a pass if they wanted to travel more than six miles out of the city.[47] Although all those under 'Abd al-Rahman's rule faced restrictions upon their movements, the consequences were more severe for the Jewish community, because their livelihood was based on long-distance trade. Consequently, Herati Jews reacted very strongly to the imposition of the ban on travel to Russian territory. It is clear that 'Ali Khanov took their anxiety very seriously. The Jews of Herat feared a destruction of their livelihood if they were forced to return home within two months. Even if this was not the government's stated intent, this may have occurred through the steep decline in trade, endemic warfare, isolation, and repression. In fact, this letter could also be viewed as symptomatic of the great fear of the Herati Jewish community. Later the

[46] Fayz Muhammad Katib, *Siraj al-Tawarikh.* Vol. 3 (Kabul, 1331-33 AH [1913-5]), 554.
[47] Gregorian, 143.

reluctance to issue passports and the hindrance of internal movement was generally ascribed to the government's negative feelings towards the Jewish community.[48]

After facing the onslaught of 'Abd al-Rahman, it is not surprising that the first Jews from Afghanistan arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* in 1892. By 1900, approximately 100 emigrants settled mainly in the Bukharan quarter of Jerusalem. The first arrivals were sent back to Central Asia as known representatives of their community, in order to encourage further immigration, and to raise funds for the Yishuv.[49] This was an unusual wave of emigration, as the majority of Jews who left Afghanistan settled close by in Russian Turkistan. Shi'is sought refuge in Persia, and prominent Pashtun families settled in the Ottoman Empire and India.[50] At the end of the nineteenth-century, ordinary people struggled to survive, and fought against the scourges of poverty and famine.[51] 'Abd al-Rahman's actions reverberated far beyond that of a single generation. By the time that he died in 1901, the peoples of Afghanistan,

> who had over the millennia established a reasonable *modus vivendi* with their neighbours in a region which, historically, is highly multi-ethnic, had become alienated not just one from the other but, in many cases, been forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands and dumped down in environments that were both alien and hostile. Their sufferings produced a lasting distrust, even aversion to centralized government. ... It is not surprising, therefore, that tribes and ethnic groups who had been subject to such persecution and dislocation became insular, isolationist and ethnocentric.[52]

Thus, some of the causes of future crises in Afghanistan may be traced to the terrible sufferings inflicted upon the Afghanistani people under 'Abd al-Rahman Khan. For

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[48] When the amir's feelings were more positive (such as under Habibullah, and Amanuallah) then the ability to move freely was facilitated.

[49] Bezalel in Bar 'am-Ben Yossef, 31. See also Ben-Zion Yehoshua, "Amour de Sion Chez Les Juifs d'Afghanistan" in *Sillages* 4 (Spring 1981): 104-108 for a traditional Afghanistani view of the benefits of living in Eretz-Yisrael. (Hereafter: Yehoshua 1981a)

[50] Levy, 8.

[51] Lee, 596.

[52] Ibid, xxvii-xxviii. One of the causes of 'Abd al-Rahman's ashtonishing cruelty may have been a medical condition. According to Lee, following the opinion of Dr. Geraint James, he suffered from chronic nephritis among other diseases. (570)

their part, the Jewish community started to search for alternative homes away from Afghanistan.

Habibullah Khan: Edging Towards Full Sovereignty

'Abd al-Rahman's son and successor, Habibullah (r.1901-19) was the first Afghan ruler since 1772 whose succession to power was peaceful.[53] He had a pleasant temperament, and set about a general reconciliation after the excesses of 'Abd al-Rahman. While his rule has been characterized as laissez-faire, the country clearly needed time to heal from the trauma of 'Abd al-Rahman's reign. Despite this shift, Habibullah followed the foreign policy themes of his father's rule by balancing the demands of his powerful northern and southern neighbours, maintaining isolation and garnering as much independence as possible from Britain.[54] Internally, Habibullah increased the power of the State Council, abolished torture in prisons, and established new schools. He also created a printing house, and a bureau of translation.[55] These innovations occurred a little bit later than similar reforms in Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt. However, the ulama were able to gradually regain their traditional influence in Afghanistan through a relaxation of central governmental controls as well as royal patronage. Outside pressures were increasingly felt as Asian nationalism and Pan-Islamism challenged traditional models of political thought within Afghanistan.

Perhaps Habibullah's most pivotal early action was granting a general amnesty to those who fled during his father's rule. This had a significant impact on Afghanistan's intellectual life in the twentieth century. As prominent families returned home, they brought new ideas and "concepts of Afghan nationhood and Afghan nationality began to take shape."[56] Soon Kabul became an active centre of intellectual life.

[53] Balland in Yarshater, 554.
[54] Adamec 1974, 10.
[55] Nawid, 35-6.
[56] Ibid, xviii-xix, 31, 35.

Two of the most important families to return were both branches of the royal Muhammadza'i Pashtun tribe. Each family in turn left an indelible mark upon the history of Afghanistan. The Tarzi family spent twenty years in Damascus. Its patriarch, Mahmud, was a student of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and became what the Encyclopaedia Iranica calls a "militant nationalist fervent supporter of modernism and convinced pan-Islamist."[57] Upon return to his native land, Tarzi gathered a group of constitutionalist 'Young Afghans' who favoured the Ottoman Empire and its technical assistance especially over that of England. Between 1911 and 1919, the newspaper *Siraj al-Akhbar* was published under Tarzi's supervision. It was Afghanistan's first successful newspaper, bringing world politics to a Kabul audience and helping to promote modernist Islam. Later Tarzi played an important role in Amanullah's administration. Amanullah married Mahmud Tarzi's daughter Soraya in 1916, and consequently grew closer to the Young Afghan movement. The amir appointed his father-in-law to serve as his first foreign minister.

The second approach to modernisation came from another exiled branch of the Muhammadza'is. The Mosahiban family returned from India and quickly became important members of the Afghan army. They were not proponents of liberal Islamic ideals, but rather sought to apply Western knowledge through technology.[58] After Amanullah's downfall and the defeat of Habibullah Kalakani (Bacha-i Saqqao), Muhammad Nadir Shah, his brother Muhammad Hashim Khan, and son Muhammad Zahir Shah ruled from 1929 to 1973. Both families' experiences of modernity away from Afghanistan in the late nineteenth-century left a firm imprint upon the course of the twentieth-century.

In the early years of his rule, Habibullah had trouble simply gaining recognition from the British government. This was crucial, as his father had agreed to allow the British to control Afghanistan's foreign policy. Despite Habibullah's insistence that their agreement was conducted between two nations, the British argued that it had been

[57] Balland in Yarshater, 554.
[58] Nawid, 37, 49, 52; Gregorian,163; Adamec 1974,15; Balland in Yarshater, 554.

made with an individual ruler, and thus should be renegotiated with each successor. Habibullah managed to keep the British at bay for four years until finally he allowed a delegation in, and negotiated an agreement that maintained the status quo established by his father.[59]

In 1907, the British and Russians agreed that Russia would only conduct non-political relations with Afghanistan, while Britain would allow Afghanistan to manage its own internal affairs. Habibullah was informed of the Anglo-Russian Convention after the agreement was negotiated, and in his fury, refused to sign it. Despite this irregularity, the UK and Russia maintained their respective positions.[60] In the years before World War I, relations normalised between Afghanistan and her powerful neighbours. The latter remained cautious, and "refrained from exerting undue pressures" on Afghanistan.[61] These policies were ultimately quite beneficial, because during World War I Afghanistan was able to remain neutral, and experienced relatively little social and economic upheaval.

The Jewish Community under Habibullah: A Resumption of Commerce

Habibullah was friendly to the Jewish community, and ties were generally close.[62] Habibullah was on particularly good terms with the Herati kalantar (secular leader), Mulla Aqa Jan Cohen ben Shlomo, and asked him to stay in the palace. (Unfortunately, after a sojourn of eight months in Kabul, the kalantar was murdered.[63] Clearly some in court circles did not like a Jew enjoying such influence.) Abraham Ben Agajan ha-Cohen describes how his father held a banquet in honour of the amir, and Habibullah stated that he was descended from the tribe of Benjamin.[64] Another

[59] Adamec 1974, 10.
[60] Adamec 1967, 70.
[61] Adamec 1974, 12.
[62] Unlike in Bukhara, there was not a specific holiday when the ruler visited the Jewish community. Nasrullah liked to visit the home of Rabbi Simha during Shavuot, observing the religious ceremony, and sharing in the festive meal. His son, Muzaffar al-Din, chose the night of Hoshana Rabbah to visit the Jewish community. Burton, 51.
[63] Reuven Kashani, *Yehudei Afghanistan* (Jerusalem: privately published, 1975), 33-4.
[64] Avihail and Brin, 36-7.

account is also provided, though it may be of the same incident. When Habibullah was visiting Herat, the Jewish community received him ceremoniously. The amir asked them what tribe they came from, and the heads of the community responded that they did not have a family tree. Habibullah responded in turn: " 'We do know [that] we are from the family Muhammad Zai, all of us of the Benjamin, of the seed of King Saul, from the sons of Jonathan, Afghan and Pathan.'" In appreciation of the reception Habibullah was shown, he sent 12 *khelats* (described as golden coats with golden turbans) "in honor, with body guards, so the Gentiles would see and respect the Jews."[65] Afghan beliefs of Jewish descent, whether or not accurate, could be of great assistance to the Jewish community during times of crisis. Jews were perceived to be the ancestors of the Pashtun tribe, and therefore worthy of protection. (See chapter 7 for further discussion.)

The resurgence of the Jewish community under Habibullah is clearly linked to the resumption of regional trade. Afghanistan's economic relations with her neighbours proceeded fairly well under Habibullah. Gregorian credits this to "relative internal stability, a degree of economic unity, some attempt to standardize customs fees, improved relations with India and Russian Central Asia, and official encouragement of trade."[66] Between 1870 and 1917, Afghanistan exported wool and some karakul sheepskin to the Russian empire and received chintzes, glassware, sugar, linen, silk, cotton goods, cutlery, and paper in return.[67] India also exported cotton goods, sugar and paper to Afghanistan, but supplemented this with dyes, tea, iron, scissors, needles and thread, drugs and machinery. India imported fruits, vegetables, grain, pulses, wool, ghee, tobacco, carpets, and horses from Afghanistan. In these simple lists, a hierarchy of goods is evident. Afghanistan only exported natural resources and handmade items. India and Russia exported goods that required an intermediate level of manufacturing.[68] Trade with Persia declined because of political disagreements and Afghanistan's

[65] Ibid, 31-2, account provided by Michael Gul after immigrating to Israel, though no date is included. May Schnasi argues that this visit must have occurred in 1907, when Habibullah was touring Afghanistan. (Personal correspondence, 17 April 2003.)

[66] Gregorian, 198.

[67] Ibid, 196.

[68] Ibid, 197.

disorganised customs facilities. Consequently, Herat's silk and carpet industries fell into disarray. Despite some gains, like the establishment of banks and the placement of a commercial agent in India, Afghanistan's economy was still harmed by poor infrastructure, communication and banking methods, and the relative lack of diplomatic and economic contacts. These deficiencies are evidenced in the first joint stock company, the Afghan Motor Transport Company. It was founded with the help of Habibullah, and targeted the wealthy as investors. Ostensibly, the handful of lorries and automobiles were meant to carry freight between Kabul and India; in practice however, they were used by the royal family, and were not allowed to get dirty or scratched while driven on the few wide dirt roads in Afghanistan. Only half of the taxes collected ever reached the government. Under these conditions, reform was a difficult goal. Habibullah did not have enough revenue to modernise, and maintain the army, court, and a burdensome bureaucracy.[69] Even under good stewardship, economic development remained slow.

World War I and its Political Legacy

When World War I commenced, Afghanistan declared neutrality. For the first two months of the conflict, this posed little problem for Habibullah. When the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers in October 1914, the stakes became far higher. Suddenly, the leaders of the Sunni world and guardians of the holy places were fighting against the British. The mood in Afghanistan was very much pro-Turkish if not pro-German, and the British realised that only one man, Habibullah himself, prevented Afghanistan from joining Germany. The amir's neutrality upset both the religious community, which wanted to support the Caliphate, and the nationalists who wanted full independence from Britain.

Neutrality became increasingly difficult to maintain when a German mission appeared on the Afghan frontier, and effectively ended the nation's isolation.[70] In

[69] Gregorian, 202.
[70] Adamec 1967, 83; Adamec 1974, 27; Nawid, 39.

1915, a series of Ottoman and German emissaries arrived in Kabul. The German Lieutenant Werner Otto von Hentig headed a mission, joined by the Turkish officer Kazim Bey and Indian prince Mahendra Pratap. They encouraged Habibullah to start military action against India. The Hentig Mission ended Afghanistan's isolation, and upset the governments of Britain and Russia greatly, forcing them to keep troops near the Afghan border. Habibullah expected to be rewarded after the war by the British, as he had remained neutral despite these overtures.[71] While the amir received a letter from George V thanking him, with his subsidy increased, Habibullah felt that these gestures did not properly reward him for taking the dangerous and difficult position of neutrality.

As the end of World War I drew nearer, many were relieved that Afghanistan had been spared the ravages visited upon the Ottoman Empire. With the defeat of the Central Powers and the burgeoning Russian Revolution, once again the international balance of power shifted. Suddenly, the pressure on the northern border that had lasted for hundreds of years disappeared (albeit briefly). In some ways, this was even more significant than the end of the war for Afghanistan. The Russian Revolution created a new geo-political reality, which opened up the potential for a new relationship between the fledgling USSR and Afghanistan.

Habibullah was criticized for many reasons. They included his personal liberalism, as he allowed the women in his family to wear short veils and ride horses. But far more harmful was his continuing alliance with Great Britain without visible rewards, in the form of a recognized independence. Habibullah appeared to have sacrificed the "interests of Islam for the sake of winning Afghan independence" and yet had failed to achieve this secondary goal.[72] This was deeply disappointing to the amir. On 11 February 1919, Habibullah asked for the remainder of the British subsidy deposited in the Bank of India. Adamec argues that this shows that the amir may have been preparing for a conflict with Britain. Nine days later, he was assassinated in his

[71] Adamec 1974, 17, 20-1, 41; and Adamec 1967, 85.
[72] Adamec 1974, 44.

sleep on a hunting trip.[73] Of those vying for power, only his third son Amanullah remained in Kabul. This left Amanullah in a good position to become amir - he was far from the murder, yet close to governmental institutions.

Amanullah: Imagination without Grounding

On 13 April 1919, Amanullah declared independence from British suzerainty. A few weeks later, Afghan troops crossed into India, and the Third Anglo-Afghan War, or the War of Independence, as it is known within Afghanistan, commenced. The war lasted less than a month, as the resources of the British Empire were exhausted after World War I. The most severe military actions came when the Afghans cut the water supply for Landi Kotal and Britain closed the Khyber Pass.

At the beginning of Amanullah's tenure, he used religious rationale to consolidate his power. Amanullah was able to unite various power blocks in jihad against the British.[74] Through this action, he gained the allegiance of the ulama who would have otherwise supported his uncle, Nasrullah as the rightful heir to Habibullah. Nawid writes that the "sacralization of military action as holy war was highly successful." Amanullah quieted all opposition and emerged as a hero throughout the Muslim world, but especially in India.[75]

In the first year, when Amanullah sought to solidify his reign, he clung to Islamic values, leading Friday prayers, and giving the sermon. At that time, his popularity remained strong. Soon, however, Amanullah shifted his focus to social and economic reform. As Afghanistan gained increasing international recognition and established diplomatic relations with European powers, Amanullah became enamoured with the idea of modernisation, and tried to transform Afghanistan's society and economy. With the help of his foreign minister, Mahmud Tarzi, Amanullah's nationalism developed along a "reformist, secular-equalitarian course that differed from anything Afghanistan

[73] Ibid, 5, 42-6.
[74] Adamec 1974, 48-9, and Balland in Yarshater, 554.
[75] Nawid, xix, 54, 64; Adamec 1974, 77.

had seen in the past."[76] Though wildly unrealistic, Amanullah imagined a new Afghanistan, one that was barely realised forty years later. Unfortunately, Amanullah's dream was grand and unobtainable, though he was an abolitionist who protected the rights of minorities, and commenced a veritable renaissance in education. This earned him the loyalty of those who were far from being the traditional stalwarts of power.[77]

In February 1923, the Fundamental Law was established. It was Afghanistan's first constitution and set out the duties of the king, ministers, and governmental officials, as well as the functions of the state council, advisory committees, organisation of the courts, and so on. Afghanistan's full independence was restated and Islam was declared the official state religion. This was done without specifying Sunni Islam, so as not to antagonize the Shi'i community. Very important to the tiny non-Muslim populace as well as to the Hazaras, Nuristanis, and other ethnic minorities was Article 8, which "declared that all people residing in Afghanistan were Afghan citizens regardless of religion or creed."[78] This had a significant impact for the Jewish community. In the 1920s and the 1930s, many Jews were able to travel as they held valid Afghan passports. While Muhammad Hashim Khan's administration later contested the validity of these passports, they did provide a certain amount of flexibility for their holders, especially those who fled Central Asia during the Russian Revolution.[79]

In her book on Amanullah, Senzil Nawid outlines pivotal sections of the Fundamental Law, describing the abolition of slavery, forced labor, and torture, and the prohibition of unlawful arrest. Personal property was to be secure, and all citizens were deemed equal under the law. However, one of the Constitutionalists' primary aims, limiting the authority of the king was not realised. The ban on slavery and forced labour were highly regarded by the populace, yet Amanullah's support began to

[76] Adamec 1974, 77

[77] Leon B. Poullada "Political Modernization in Afghanistan: the Amanullah Reforms," in eds. George Grasmuck, Ludwid Adamec, and Francis Irwin, *Afghanistan: Some New Approaches* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1969), 132; Nawid, 57, 77; Balland, 554.

[78] Nawid, 79.

[79] See chapter 4 for further information.

dwindle when his reforms affected the traditional patterns of life.[80] Starting in 1923, almost until the end of his reign, Amanullah cut spending on the army and increased taxes. Thus, while the poor and downtrodden had more protection under the law, they also had less income. This caused discontent and corruption, as governmental officials were not able to support their families from their salary alone, and thus solicited bribes.

Minorities under Amanullah: A Time of Tolerance

Minorities viewed Amanullah very favourably. He was the only ruler who did not attempt to use national unification as a way of ensuring religious homogenization. Often criticized by the ulama for these policies, Amanullah earned the long-term admiration of the Jewish, Hindu, and Shi'i Muslim communities.

Hindus

In many ways, the experiences of the Hindu community matched those of the Jews. Perhaps the most spectacular example of religious tolerance occurred for this small population. Hindu merchants were principally responsible for Afghanistan's foreign trade. They conducted a large amount of the commerce with Central Asia and India, especially Baluchistan.[81] In fact, Hindus were far more competitive than their Jewish compatriots, and pushed them out of money- changing and the wholesale trade in medicines. In Bukhara, this occurred far sooner, for money lending was already a Hindu monopoly in the sixteenth century.[82]

For a brief time in the 1920s, Afghanistan's geographical proximity to India, and Amanullah's desire for better relations with the Indian populace led to far more opportunities for Afghanistani Hindus. In 1920, Amanullah wanted to encourage Indian independence from Britain, and used this goal to push for equal rights for Hindus in Afghanistan. He saw this as a first step towards building a nation that respected the rights of all groups, including religious and ethnic minorities. Amanullah

[80] Nawid, 79-80, 83, 187.
[81] Gregorian, 62-5.
[82] Burton, 56.

enacted a series of decrees that amounted to a form of civil-rights legislation. These included permission for the Hindus to attend military school, join the army, own property, and rebuild temples. Taxes were also reduced to the amount that Muslims paid, and the *jizya* was cut in half. Hindus were no longer compelled to wear an orange or yellow turban, and in the most striking measure of solidarity with the subcontinent, killing cows was prohibited in Afghanistan. At this time, there was very little internal opposition to these decrees, as the population empathised with the plight of its southern neighbour. India was still subject to British rule, while Afghanistan exhaulted in her newly found full independence.[83]

Three years later, opposition began to mount against these measures of tolerance. In the initial reform stage (1919-23) lower-level clergy, especially those in the Pashtun tribal region were threatened by Amanullah's changes. Consequently, they were the first to challenge the king. They were unaware of modern Islamic thinking circulating throughout the Muslim world, and were upset by these new ideas, especially those which protruded into their domain. The ulama were angered that non-Muslims were granted legal equality, and that girls were encouraged to receive an education. Curiously enough, Pashtun mullas thought that after girls went to school, they would be sent to Kabul, just as boys were sent into the army as conscripts. This misconception does not appear to have been resolved, and in March 1924, the displeasure of the ulama continued when new laws were introduced, which they felt also contradicted the Shari'a.[84]

By September 1924, Amanullah was forced to rescind his most liberal measures. Article 2 of the Fundamental Law was changed so that Hanafi Sunni Islam was Afghanistan's official religion, and Hindus and Jews would only be protected provided that they paid the *jizya,* wore clothing to distinguish them from Muslims, and did not upset "public morale and tranquility."[85] For Hindus, Amanuallah's rule was very

[83] Nawid, 66.
[84] Ibid, 92-100, 189.
[85] Ibid, 112.

positive, as the amir held them in high esteem and sought to ease many of the burdens which accompanied their *dhimmi* status.

The Hazara

Despite the backlash of 1924, Amanullah continued to work for the benefit of his non-Sunni Muslim subjects, and the Hazara may have been his most faithful supporters. As Gregorian notes, he was the first ruler of Afghanistan "who had not capitalized on or manipulated Shi'i-Sunni religious antagonisms for political ends."[86] Fayz Muhammad Hazara al-Katib, a historian and scribe, was the highest-ranking Hazara at court. He remained loyal to Amanullah far into his successor's reign. Faiz Muhammad was grateful to Amanullah for protecting the Twelver-Shi'i Hazara community from slavery and "the routine abuse and injustice which they had long endured" in Afghanistan.[87] (Later, in 1929, Habibullah Kalakani found it very difficult to gain Shi'i allies, as he incited hatred against them, and they remembered the tolerance of Amanullah.)

Just as in the case of the Hindu community, tolerance towards Shi'i groups earned Amanullah the wrath of rural, conservative ulama. Even after the execution of three Qadiyani mollas (see full discussion below), Amanullah continued to be taunted as a Shi'i sympathizer as he had earned the respect of many Hazaras.[88] More liberal members of the ulama were moved by the strong level of support shown to Amanullah by the Hazara representatives to the Loya Jirga (grand tribal assembly) of 1924, and thanked Amanullah for showing a "benevolent attitude towards the nation."[89]

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[86] Gregorian, 280.

[87] R. D. McChesney, translator and editor, *Kabul Under Siege: Fayz Muhammad's Account of the 1929 Uprising* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 41. This is an English translation of the Russian translation of Fayz Muhammad al-Katib's incomplete history of life under Habibullah Kalakani's rule. (The original document was destroyed in the Russian invasion or ensuing civil war.) Fayz Muhammad was the official scribe and historian for Amir Habibullah and Amanullah's courts. When quoting directly from Faiz Muhammad, I will specify that this is his account, and not McChesney's editorial work.

[88] Ibid, 159.

[89] Nawid, 109 and 116.

Jews

Like other religious minorities, Amanullah's rule was mostly a positive time for the Jewish community, and he was well liked by them. The folklorist, Zebulon Kort who collected thousands of tales, reports that in the years after World War I and before Nazi influence entered the country (roughly corresponding to Amanullah's reign) the economic and social condition of the Jews was favourable. In Herat, the gates to the Jewish section of town did not need to be locked in fear of an attack.[90]

The Israeli researcher and founder of *Pe'amim*, Itzhak Bezalel writes that Amanullah's rule was a prosperous time where they were able to enjoy "greater economic opportunities."[91] However, Amanullah's economic policy towards the Jews appears to have been contradictory. In 1919, just after independence, a regulation was promulgated that forced Jews to be traders to the exclusion of everything else.[92] In the early 1920s, Amanullah's administration placed tighter controls over the import-export trade. At first, government licenses were required when items crossed the nation's frontiers. Erich Brauer states that an exporting license was only granted to individuals "after depositing the value of the goods as security for the return of the money to Afghanistan."[93] In 1923, the Minister of Finance, Mir Hashim Khan founded the *Shirkat-i Amaniye*. This organisation appears to have been the predecessor of the Ashami Company. Brauer describes it as a "trade association," which exported entrails, hides, furs, and carpets. Amanullah and Mir Hashim Khan were the principal stockowners, and the amir claimed a private monopoly over the trade in precious and semi-precious stones as well.[94] This was the beginning of a system of monopolies, and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. As a contemporary observer, Brauer states that the "radical measures" were "designed to concentrate the country's

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[90] Zebulon Kort, "*Yehudei Afghanistan v'Eretz Yisrael*," *Mahanaim*, 114: (Adar II 5728 [spring 1968]): 83.

[91] Bezalel in Bar'am-Ben Yossef, 21.

[92] Landshut 1950a, 68.

[93] Brauer 1942, 125.

[94] Ibid, note 13, citing Bruno Markowski, *Die Materielle Kultur des Kabulgebietes* (Leipzig, 1932): 118, 120.

trade wholly in the hands of its rulers."[95] Consequently, some Jewish merchants had trouble maintaining solvency.

Despite apparent economic restrictions, the Jewish opinion of the Afghanistan's first independent ruler did not plummet. Writing in 1929, Abraham Emanuelson, originally from Afghanistan but settled in New York, noted that: "Amicable and friendly relations ... exist between the Jews and the government." This warmth was kindled under Habibullah, yet Amanullah "exceeds his father in kindness. The Jews feel safe under his protection."[96] In 1927, there were perhaps as many as sixty separate Jewish settlements – in major cities, as well as in smaller communities throughout the northern rim of Afghanistan.[97] Traditional patterns of settlement based on the exegencies of trade were firmly ensconced until the murder of Muhammad Nadir Shah in 1933.

Amanullah's Encouragement of Education

Amanullah used increased revenue from higher taxes to build a palace, support Afghan missions abroad, and also to fund education. A. Ghani argues that Amanullah's greatest contribution to Afghanistan was his support of secular education. In only four years (between 1924 and 1928), 4,823 children finished primary school, while 158 completed high school and 151 were sent abroad.[98] Amanullah founded three secondary schools for boys which used French, German, and English as their respective media of instruction. Schools were also founded to train teachers and administrators, and encourage the transmission of the arts, foreign languages, and technical skills. In January 1921, a girls' school was founded, it had 800 students by 1928.[99] Amanullah hoped to facilitate the emergence of an intellectual class and train competent

[95] Ibid.

[96] Emanuelson, 47.

[97] Landshut 1950a, 68, and E.G. Lowenthal, "So viele Juden leben in Afghanistan und Iran," in *Revue Juive*, no.5, 1 February 1980, 19.

[98] Ehsan Yarshater, ed., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*" (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), s.v. "Afghanistan XI. Administration," by A. Ghani, 561. See also, S.Q. Reshtia "Dévelopement de l'instruction Publique en Afghanistan," *Afghanistan* no. 1 (Jan-Mar 1946): 21.

[99] Personal correspondence with May Schinasi, 17 April 2003.

administrators. The latter goal was achieved to some extent, as graduates of these new institutions comprised the backbone of administrators under the rule of the Mosahiban family. However, Amanullah had a great deal of trouble convincing the ulama that secular education would not contravene the Shari'a.[100]

Patterns of Jewish Education

Between 1919 and 1923, many foreigners began to arrive in Afghanistan – especially technicians, engineers, doctors, and businessmen.[101] Some of these Western experts were Jewish, and they in turn had an influence on the Afghanistani Jewish community. Before Amanullah declared independence in 1919, Jews interacted with their co-religionists in Persia, India, Central Asia, and Russia. Yet the Jewish guest workers employed by the Afghan government brought knowledge of Western Judaism with them, and explained how Jews were prominent in the economic and political life of other lands.[102] This provided a source of inspiration for the local community, parts of whom then looked more favourably upon secular forms of education.

Most documented information about Jewish education concerns religious and privately financed institutions before and during Amanullah's reign.[103] The community had several different reactions to the educational reforms proposed in the 1920s. In Herat, some were open to change, while others remained firmly opposed. One group of parents was disatisfied with the scope of their children's education, as it was confined to learning religious subjects by rote. The parents hired a teacher, Rabbi Yehoshua Amram who tried to instruct the children using more modern methods. They ordered books from Jerusalem, studied in Hebrew, and even learned a bit of arithmetic. Kort writes that all of the students in this school *did* learn something, including many girls

[100] Gregorian, 239-43.
[101] Nawid, 93.
[102] Kort in *Mahanayim*, Spring 1968, 80.
[103] Under Muhammad Hashim Khan's regency (1933-46), some boys attended state-run Muslim schools, especially in Kabul. (Author's interview with Shulamit and Amanda Ambalu, London, 30 December 1998.)

who gained literacy skills.[104] Despite these innovations, this school was still firmly rooted in Judaic traditions. (The Alliance Israëlite Universelle tried to establish contact with Jews in Afghanistan, and hoped to establish a school. However, the government felt this would be too much foreign influence, and stopped their overtures.) Conversely, when Amanullah proposed a Jewish school where European languages would be taught, the Jewish community refused it. Emanuelson explains that pious Jews feared this might lead to conversion – perhaps this community's greatest fear.[105] In many ways, the reactions of religious Jews paralleled that of religious Muslims, yet without the political repercussions. Their power did not extend beyond the *mahallah*.

Despite these fears, one young man did receive a thoroughly modern education, as he was part of a delegation sent to Soviet Central Asia for further study. In the 1920s, as in the 1930s, and 1940s, the exceptional life of Shmuel Shabtai Dadash gives us some sense of what it was possible to accomplish and also endure. Dadash was born in 1910 in Herat to a family involved in commerce. His father was the community's kalantar. Extraordinarily, in 1924, Dadash joined an official school delegation. He was sent to Samarkand where he stayed for the next six years, studying Russian, Arabic, Turkish, and English. In his attempt to learn English, he translated what amounted to be an entire dictionary into the dialect of the Jews of Afghanistan. This is a treasure trove for the study of the Afghanistani branch of Judeo-Persian. In fact, he was able to record a great many details about this dialect before it was strongly influenced by other languages, especially Hebrew.[106] Later, Dadash endured fourteen years of imprisonment during the regency of Muhammad Hashim Khan. Like the rest of the Jewish community, Amanullah's reign was a bright time for Dadash. While Amanullah's plans for Afghanistan were not based firmly in reality, the tolerance he showed to all recognised religious minorities is long remembered as a hallmark of his reign.

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[104] Kort in *Mahanayim*, Spring 1968, 81.

[105] Emanuelson, 47.

[106] Yehoshua 1981a, 109, and author's interview with Ben-Zion Yehoshua, 15 July 2001, Jerusalem. Towards the end of Dadash's life, he became friends with Yehoshua, and entrusted Yehoshua with his dictionary. During this author's interview with Yehoshua, he showed me a photocopy of the dictionary.

A Less Tolerated Minority: The Ahmadiyas

Groups viewed as heretics were treated far more harshly, even by a tolerant ruler. Amanullah's grip on power was endangered when he was linked to a schism of Shi'i Islam. A 1924 uprising against Amanullah intensified when a rumor started that he had become a member of the Ahmadiyah or Qadiyani sect. In the late nineteenth-century, Mirza Gholam Ahmad founded this religious group. He came from Qadiyan, a town in eastern Punjab.[107] Ghulam Ahmad claimed that he was an Islamic prophet. His religious movement was very threatening to all normative Muslims, but especially Sunnis. Often Qadiyanis are not considered Muslim, as Pakistan declared in 1974.[108] Before 1924, Qadiyanis were barely tolerated in Afghanistan, but with the impetus of this anti-Amanullah rumor, their entire community was placed in great danger. In order to combat these whisperings, Amanullah arrested thirty members of this group and had several mullas stoned to death. This action was strongly condemned by the Qadiyani community in India and England, as well as by the London *Times*. Nawid explains that the official newspaper *Aman-i-Afghan* responded with the following argument. It wrote that ideologies, which "offend prevailing beliefs," would be upsetting to the populace. Interestingly, the piece cited Article 9 of the Constitution that protected religious minorities whose beliefs were "entirely different from Islam," stating that they had been accepted in Afghanistan for hundreds of years.[109] This was the only apparent exception to Amanullah's policy of minority toleration. In the new penal code promulgated between 1924-25, Article 123 said that: "members of outlawed Muslim religious sects (Sabi, Zendiq, and especially Qadiyani) were to be killed."[110] The Qadiyanis were viewed as heretics rather than *ahl al-dhimma* and their experiences appear to reflect more upon those of other nineteenth century schisms of Shi'i Islam like the Baha'i faith.

[107] Nawid, p.120.

[108] Francis Robinson, ed. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 208, 379. In Pakistan, Ahmadiyas were declared non-Muslim in 1974, and ten years later, it became an offense for them to call themselves Muslim or their places of worship mosques. (379)

[109] Nawid, 120-22.

[110] Gregorian, 250.

Reform and Revolt

Despite wide-scale discontent after 1924, Amanullah was committed to liberal reform. His attitude towards the ulama hardened, and he strengthened modernisation efforts.[111] Between 1925 and 1927, while no new reforms were introduced, Amanullah's government returned to its previous goals of central political authority, and advancements in education and women's rights. This time Amanullah brushed aside the clergy and appealed directly to the populace.

At this point, Amanullah alienated some of his most important supporters, especially War Minister Muhammad Nadir Khan of the Mosahiban family. Muhammad Nadir Khan wanted modern technology and scientific advances to be encouraged without accompanying social and cultural reforms.[112] Amanullah thought that the war minister assisted the Mangal Pashtuns in their rebellion, and soon found himself in a genteel form of exile as ambassador to France.[113] Amanullah's vision of Afghanistan did not account for the exigencies of his country's limited economic and social development, conservative ulama, and tribal structures. His hopes grew as he embarked upon a grand tour, while the realisation of these dreams became increasingly remote.

Between November 1927 and June 1928, Amanullah embarked on a tour of Europe and Asia. He visited India, Egypt, England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Persia. The trip made headlines throughout the world and certainly augmented Afghanistan's international status.[114] Unfortunately, the king's eight-month absence led to a rise in administrative corruption. This greatly upset the populace and hastened the spread of revolt in the autumn of 1928. Only an ineffective, skeletal staff was left in Kabul, and opposition was able to gain strength easily. In spite of these serious issues, Amanullah's popularity was very high after the

[111] Nawid, 105-6.
[112] Ibid,124 and 147.
[113] Balland in Yarshater, 555.
[114] *The Times*, 14 March 1928, 18.

tour. Nawid argues that he could have maintained his rule if he had improved the conditions of soldiers, punished governmental corruption, and not insisted upon radical changes that contradicted the population's tribal and religious customs.[115]

Amanullah wanted Afghanistan to follow the same path as Turkey and Persia, yet these two countries had long histories of imperial rule to draw upon. The same cannot be said of Afghanistan. With hindsight, in the 1940s, the British India Office blamed Amanullah's fall on the fact that he possessed neither the "dictatorial power of Reza Shah" nor "the administrative genius of Kemal Ataturk."[116] Indeed, Amanullah would not have needed to be a brilliant dictator or administrator if he had only limited his imagination in accordance with some of the realities of his country. Historian Leon Poullada states that Amanullah fell because he neglected the four pillars of his power: the economy, army, settled populations, and faithful tribal leaders.[117]

Instead of plying a more moderate course upon returning home in 1928, Amanullah felt a renewed zeal for reform. He convened a Loya Jerga whose thousand members endorsed a series of liberal measures. This gathering excluded the clergy altogether, and subsequently threatened the higher-ranking ulama. Amanullah wanted to seize *waqf* endowments as well as intrude upon the ulama's power. He also wished to substitute a penal code based on tribal customs and the Shari'a for one based on Western law. Yet Amanullah's most controversial measures all concerned the role of women. He wanted to improve women's education, end forced and child marriages, and discourage polygamy, hijab, and purdah. These issues ignited the clergy who united with rural mullahs and allied themselves with "militant tribes, dissident groups, opposition leaders and adventurers."[118] Amanullah did not provide the army with sufficient resources, and this action undermined efforts to achieve some amount of unity throughout Afghanistan.[119] He also failed to create an urban middle class, which

[115] Nawid,136-9.
[116] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations*, 15.
[117] Poullada, 125.
[118] Nawid, xix, 138, 190-1, McChesney, 13.
[119] Poullada, 133.

along with a contented army, could have supported the reforms and defended the liberal government.[120]

Very upset by Amanullah's new wave of reforms, four hundred ulama signed a fatwa against Amanullah in September 1928. They accused him of violating Islamic law and claimed that "his innovations (*bed'at*) amounted to heresy" and thus he was not to be followed. On 4 October 1928, Amanullah responded by executing four prominent members of the ulama. This action swept away all of the support that he might still have retained.[121] Then in November 1928, in response to new regulations that enforced the use of identity cards and passports along the southern border or Durrand Line, the Shinwari Pashtun tribe revolted.[122] Encouraged by the ulama, they interrupted the country's limited infrastructure, halting traffic between Kabul and Jalalabad, and cutting telgraph lines.[123] They also burned governmental buildings, including Amanullah's winter palace in Jalalabad.[124] However, Amanullah's brother-in-law, Ali Ahmad Khan Luynab, the High Commander for the Southern and Eastern Provinces, was able to reconcile with the Shinwari leaders.[125]

Amanullah was forced to back down from aims his populace could not understand, and found threatening. All schools for girls were closed, and the laws regarding child marriage, polygamy, and unveiling were annulled.[126] By the end of 1928, few people trusted Amanullah. Both liberal and conservative members of society were upset by Amanullah's careless disregard of widespread social norms, as well as high taxes and rampant governmental corruption. Amanullah's dreams faded into the nightmare of his successor's tyranny and anarchy.

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[120] Nawid, xx.
[121] Ibid,155-8.
[122] Balland in Yarshater, 555.
[123] Mc Chesney, 32.
[124] Nawid,162.
[125] Mc Chesney, 35-6.
[126] Nawid,163.

Habibullah Kalakani: Reign of Terror

"Hiding behind Islamic slogans, they wrought a disaster impossible for the human mind to comprehend." - Fayz Muhammad al-Katib Hazara[127]

Instead of life settling down after the Shinwari revolt, insurgent forces descended upon Kabul. Afghanistan was confronted with a rebellion led by a Tajik man named Habibullah, who came from the town of Kalakan in the Kuhdaman region north of Kabul. Kalakani was a highway bandit, and by the autumn of 1928 had "gained a reputation as 'the defender of the oppressed' akin to Robin Hood."[128] Fayz Muhammad reports that Kalakani described himself in the following manner:

> ' I was a poor man, hiding from the government up in the mountains, in fear of being punished for my banditry. When Aman Allah decided to undermine the foundations of religion and turn the nation of believers into atheists, I opposed him and was victorious.'[129]

Kalakani was the first non-Pashtun ruler of Afghanistan and reigned from 18 January to 13 October 1929.[130] Kalakani was able to couch grievances against Amanullah in religious terms. He stated that it was incumbent upon Muslims to oust the amir. Indeed, during the latter part of his rule Amanullah failed to overcome the normative political discourse, which was framed in religious terms. By November, Kalakani blocked the main road to Kohistan as well as that from Kabul to Charikar. He also won the support of the ulama of Kohistan and "established himself as the defender of Islamic values and [became] a folk hero." In December 1928, Habibullah Kalakani arrived in Kabul, and on 14 January 1929, 16,000 Kohistani forces surrounded the city. The Afghan army was unable to defend against this incursion because so many solders

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[127] Mc Chesney, 59 (Faiz Muhammad's account).

[128] Nawid,165.

[129] McChesney, 149-50. Fayz Muhammad reporting Kalakani's words of 19 May 1929. I have chosen to use call Habibullah by the name of his hometown in order to avoid confusion with the amir of the same name, who ruled from 1901-19. Another common name for him, Bacha-i Saqqao, or son of the water carrier is a derisive appellation.

[130] McChesney, 1.

had been sent to Jalalabad to fight the Shinwaris.[131] Only a handful of solders fought, as officers embezzled their food and pay. Fayz Muhammad reports that they were in a "mutinous mood."[132]

The immediate cause of Amanullah's downfall was his neglect of the army. As a final desperate measure, Amanullah opened the arsenal and distributed 50,000 rifles to the Kabuli populace. Even this did not stop the Kohistanis. The fighting continued, and on 14 January, Amanullah abdicated in favor of his older brother 'Inayatullah Khan.[133] However, 'Inayatullah only lasted three days on the throne. On 18 January, Habibullah Kalakani was crowned ruler.

While Kalakani was able to defeat Amanullah and appoint new officials, he found it far more difficult to consolidate his rule across Afghanistan. Into the spring, Kalakani encountered various challenges to his rule. These included revolts by Hazaras in the Hazarajat and Pashtuns in the south. Muhammad Nadir Khan returned from France with his brothers and also started to fight against Kalakani. Ironically, by March 1929, public opinion even among the Shinwari favored Amanullah once again, as Kalakani tarnished his reputation by fostering a climate of injustice, oppression, and fear.[134]

The Hazara scribe and historian, Fayz Muhammad al-Katib unequivocally detested Kalakani. Throughout his final work, he accuses Kalakani of atrocities including "drawing and quartering living people, raping women, young girls, and young boys, charging people who had never committed even the smallest misdeed with crimes, [and] hanging innocent people. ..." Fayz Muhammad found Kalakani's reign to be a topsy-turvy world where outlaws became political leaders. In a colourful description the Hazara scribe writes:

[131] Nawid, 165-6, 170, 189.
[132] Mc Chesney, 38. (Fayz Muhammad's account.)
[133] Nawid, 170 and Mc Chesney, 45.
[134] Nawid, 176-77.

> Every seller of eggs, vinegar, grapes, firewood, grape syrup, and dates, having now taken up arms and strapped on a bandolier, wanted to be a minister, a qal'ah-begi, an aide-de-camp to the amir, a military high commissioner, a governor-general, a field marshal, a lieutenant general, a brigadier, a colonel, or a governor. ... It is clear that in such a government there is no place for a rational person.[135]

As a man employed by several royal households, Fayz Muhammad must have felt very lost indeed. His position was even more precarious due to his status as a prominent Hazara. While religious minorities fared well under Amanullah, they endured terrible subjugation under Habibullah Kalakani.

Minorities under Kalakani

Kalakani rode to power on a wave of grievances shaped by the Sunni ulama; thus, it is not surprising that through his rule "the constant drumbeat of ethnic and sectarian loyalties and conflict" was heard.[136] Religious and ethnic minorities were especially targeted during Kalakani's reign. In the spring of 1929, Kalakani encouraged the Suleiman Khel Pashtuns to attack the Hazara. In order to legitimise this action, the Suleiman Khel declared jihad. Prominent members of the ulama said this was illegal. According to Faiz Muhammad, they said that:

> [I]n every country under the protection of any government, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, idolators, Buddhists, Shi'ites, Sunnis, pagans, Isma'ilis, and even all seventy-three sects of Islam live peacefully together. ... Each upholds those norms of human conduct that do not contradict the holy code of his own religion.[137]

Despite the concerted efforts of the commission, Kalakani still incited members of the Suleiman Khel in Kabul, and a veritable pogrom descended upon the Hazara and Qizilbash Shi'i communities.[138]

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[135] Mc Chesney 116, and 234 (Fayz Muhammad's account)
[136] Ibid, 3.
[137] Ibid, 151.
[138] Ibid, 152 (Fayz Muhammad's account)

Fayz Muhammad's general description of Hazara persecution under Kalakani is strikingly similar to his autobiographical account of being brutalized in June 1929.[139] Interestingly enough, the Persian embassy did provide some assistance. Its military attaché had been instructed to do everything possible to help Afghanistan's Shi'i community "without interfering ... in a way that might invite an attack upon Iran."[140] Just as during 'Abd al-Rahman's rule, Persia was willing to go one step short of war to protect the Hazara community.

Very little is written about the Jews during this time. Perhaps this is because most of the Jewish population lived in Herat during Kalakani's rule. They resided under the only regional official, 'Abd al-Rahim, who was competent enough to maintain his governorship well into Mosahiban rule.[141] In fact, it was only at the end of 1931 that 'Abd al-Rahim allowed the province of Herat to be governed again by Kabul.[142] Even in 1934 he would only interact with officials that he had appointed, ignoring the central government's choices.[143]

Despite the lack of Jewish eyewitness accounts of Kalakani's rule, in general, when a government changed, the community suffered. Some of their experiences may be inferred by more general information written during similar times. Until the 1970s, Kalakani's seizure of power was the most dramatic break in the chain of Muhammadza'i Pashtun rule. When explaining power transitions, Reuven Kashani states that: "The Jewish community [would] endure rape and plunder."[144] Kashani also

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[139] The scribe was forced to go on a mission to try to convince the Hazaras of the Hazarajat to accept the sovereignty of Habibullah Kalakani. Yet, he betrayed the regime by passing information to the Hazara leader Fath Muhammad. Upon returning to Kabul, they ordered him and two others to be flogged. Fayz Muhammad describes the beating as follows: "As for me, one stick caught me on the forehead and blood drenched my face and beard. I whispered the prayer of Abu Hamza ... 'Oh God! Save me! Truly, You are the savior!' Nothing more passed from my lips." (209-10) Eventually, the scribe was brought home and his family was grief-stricken to see his condition. Iodine to clean Fayz Muhammad's wounds was procured from the Persian embassy. (211)

[140] Ibid, 211.

[141] Bezalel, 17; and Kort, 80.

[142] Fraser-Tytler 1967, 230. See also PRO/FO/17198, Afghanistan 1932 Yearly Report, 402.

[143] PRO/FO/371/18243, Diary for week of 8 March 1934, 157.

[144] Reuven Kashani, "*'Al Yehudei Afghanistan*" in *Shevet Va'Am* Bet [2], (Sivan 5718 [spring 1958]), 157.

illustrates what would happen when the crowd would be incited against the Jewish population.

> [I]n those times when the crowd was wild, they would go into the Jewish neighborhoods calling out: 'kafir' [infidel] and 'chuli' [thief]. The Jews would lock their homes and the synagogue and would pray until the time passed. The government tried to control the crowds, and only at that time would the Jews go out again, and start their lives all over again. They would cry over lost people and possessions and would try to resume their normal lives.[145]

In addition to locking themselves in their homes, the Jews also escaped into the countryside during times of crisis.[146] While this description is not specific to Kalakani's rule, the government intervened only sporadically on behalf of the Jewish community.

Muhammad Nadir's Rise

One week after Amanullah fell, Muhammad Nadir Khan boarded a ship in France and started the journey to Afghanistan. He was joined by his brothers Shah Wali, Muhammad Hashim, and Muhammad Aziz.[147] Muhammad Nadir set out for Afghanistan even before Kalakani's excesses were known abroad. He may not have known that Amanullah had abdicated. McChesney argues that he may have returned: "simply because political opportunity was created by the uprising of the Shinwari."[148] In March 1929, Muhammad Nadir finally entered Afghanistan, and at this point it was not yet clear whether he intended to support Amanullah. But, in a religious conference at Hadda, the Mulla of Chaknawur refused to uphold the reinstatement of

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[145] Ibid. This paragraph is almost identical to one written by Avraham Kashani entitled "Kehilat Afghanistan," in *Mahanayim* vol. 119 (Av 5728 [summer 1968]): 134. It is not known if Avraham Kashani is related to Reuven Kashani, though it seems probable.

[146] Bezalel in Bar'am-Ben Yossef, 21. In Bukhara, a pogrom was averted in March 1918 after Jews barricaded themselves in their homes, and the amir sent guards to protect them. *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), s.v. "Bukhara," by Mordechai Altshuler.

[147] Balland in Yarshater, 555.

[148] McChesney, 88.

Amanullah.[149] Compounding religious opposition was the tribal disapproval of Amanullah. At the end of March 1929, Muhammad Hashim Khan held a tribal jirga or assembly in the Kurram Valley on behalf of his brother. There the Pashtun leaders decided that no one in Amanullah's family was fit to rule. Instead, they preferred someone who would be religiously conservative and widely popular.[150] Amanullah soon realised that he was fighting against both Kalakani and the Mosahiban family, and in despair, he left Afghanistan on 23 May 1929 never to return.

Several weeks after Amanullah's departure, a fatwa was issued against Kalakani's terror and brutality by Nur al-Mashayikh, a prominent religious figure. The fatwa considerably improved Muhammad Nadir Khan's position. His forces continued to gain momentum from the summer and into the fall.[151] On 23 September, there was an uprising in Kandahar, and by mid-October, Muhammad Nadir was crowned ruler in Kabul.[152] Two weeks later, on 1 November 1929, Habibullah Kalakani was executed, and the reign of the Tajik bandit-king came to an end.[153] Muhammad Nadir Shah consolidated his rule by relying upon the two power bases that Amanullah had alienated – the Pashtun tribes and the ulama. He exempted several tribes from military service because of their help fighting against Kalakani, and included clergy in the government.

Outwardly, Nadir Shah acted very differently from Amanullah by appeasing traditional holders of power. However, much of what Amanullah had established remained in place. According to Senzil Nawid:

> With the exception of the penal codes, the Marriage Law, and the Constitution of 1923, which were the major focus of religious opposition, all other *nezam-namas* of the Amani period, including those pertaining to conscription and identity cards, were reintroduced with slight changes.[154]

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[149] Nawid, 177.
[150] McChesney, 93 (Fayz Muhammad's account)
[151] Nawid,184-5.
[152] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part II 1919-1947*, 16 and McChesney, 272.
[153] Balland in Yarshater, 555.
[154] Nawid, 185 and 193.

Amanullah's vision was retained in its legal structure. Despite these similarities, the twentieth century never again saw a ruler so smitten with the idea of his country's modern progress, and consequent protection of minority rights.

The Rule of Muhammad Nadir Shah: Pacification and Consolidation

Muhammad Nadir Khan entered Kabul and was crowned king on 14 October 1929.[155] Afghanistan was finally free of Kalakani. Nadir reigned for only four years, from 1929 to 1933, and in that time his greatest achievement was "the political reunification, centralization, and pacification" of Afghanistan.[156] He shared governing with his brothers and their sons, a pattern that continued even after the monarchy fell, until his nephew, Muhammad Daud Khan was deposed in 1978. Nadir's four brothers were placed in the following positions: Muhammad Hashim Khan was named Prime Minister, Shah Wali Khan, Minister of War, and later sent to London, Shah Mahmud Khan, Minister of War, and Muhammad Aziz Khan was first Envoy to Moscow, and later transferred to Berlin.[157]

In order to strengthen his rule, Nadir Shah had to placate the ulama and Pashtun tribes, the sources of Amanullah's downfall. One way of garnering the support of the religious establishment was through political appointments. An important religious leader, Hazrat Sahib (Muhammad Sadiq) was appointed as Envoy to Egypt, while family loyalties were respected once again since his brothers chosen as Ministers of State and Justice respectively. The latter ministry was responsible for enforcing Shari'a law. Veiling became mandatory for women, and a religious police force was established, which took an especially harsh view of alcohol consumption. Socio-economic reconstruction commenced.[158]

Muhammad Nadir Shah faced two particularly demanding neighbours, as well as their respective opposition movements. Just as all Afghan rulers since 'Abd al-

[155] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part II*, 15.
[156] Gregorian, 340.
[157] Adamec 1974, 277, and personal correspondence with May Schinasi, 17 April 2003.
[158] See Gregorian, 294-96 for details.

Rahman, he tried to treat both the Soviet Union and Britain as equally as possible, and maintain neutrality. Any other course would have been disastrous, as either power could have unleashed forces strong enough to topple his government. The Soviet Union had the potential to start revolutionary movements in the north, while the British could have stirred up the Pashtun tribes against Nadir's rule. Consequently, Nadir did not encourage Pashtun protest against the British or the anti-Soviet, pan-Islamic Basmachi movement. A neutrality pact was signed with the Soviet Union in June 1931.[159] Contemporary British sources report that political activities amongst Central Asian Muslim refugees were suppressed, and they were removed from northern Afghanistan. Consequently, relations with the Soviet Union improved, and trade expanded. Soviet goods became widespread in Herat and the north. As noted, relations with Great Britain continued smoothly, and Nadir discouraged Indian nationalists. The British Minister in Kabul, Richard Maconachie was assured that the border would remain calm.[160] In fact, opponents to British rule also presented a challenge to Nadir, especially the egalitarianism espoused by the Pashtun nationalist-reformist party, Khudai Khidmatgaran (also known as Red Shirts). Democratic ideals could lead to the end of the Afghan monarchy, as well as the British Empire. In the 1920s, Amanullah had leaned more towards the Soviet Union's influence and some early ideals. In contrast, Nadir Shah moved closer to Britain.[161]

The new Constitution of 1931 institutionalised the ulama's power, while also allowing for gradual reforms in the judiciary system. Cases about government officials' responsibilities were not tried according to the Shari'a.[162] Outwardly the new constitution was more progressive to religious minorities. While the Constitution of 1923 made Hindus and Jews pay the *jizya* and wear something to distinguish them from Muslims, eight years later, non-Muslims were tolerated as long as they did not violate laws or social norms.[163] Being a member of *ahl al-dhimma* was no longer legislated. It became *de facto* if not *de jure*. In 1932, the Statute of Passport and Nationality

[159] Adamec, 202.
[160] IOL L/PS/12/1688, Political Department, policy paper on Afghanistan, August 1935, 66.
[161] Gregorian, 321-23, and 331-33.
[162] Ibid, 340.
[163] Ibid, 300 citing the Constitution of 1931.

declared that all those born in Afghanistan, or whose fathers were Afghan citizens, were also themselves Afghan nationals and had to have a citizenship card.[164] This is particularly important to note, for legally Jews were considered Afghan citizens. However, only a few years later, this provision was disregarded. Many Jews, particularly those born in Herat, found themselves unknowingly stripped of citizenship.

A *badal* or blood feud started between Nadir's family, the Mosahiban, and the Charki family in 1932. The Charkis had been prominent figures during Amanullah's reign, and maintained their alliance to the former amir. Nadir Shah accused Ghulam Nabi, former Minister to Moscow, of plotting to overthrow him. Instead of allowing the time for a trial, Ghulam Nabi was summarily executed. A wave of bloodshed commenced. In July 1933, Nadir's brother, Muhammad Aziz Khan was assassinated in Berlin, and two months later there was an attempt to kill the British minister. The gunman stated that he hoped this would spark a war with Britain, as he felt that Nadir was too pro-British. On the first anniversary of Ghulam Nabi's death, 8 November 1933, Muhammad Nadir Shah was himself assassinated.[165]

On the day of Muhammad Nadir's assassination, his teenaged son, Muhammad Zahir Khan was crowned shah. Zahir's uncle, Muhammad Hashim Khan acted as regent, and continued his role as Prime Minister until 1946.[166] Muhammad Hashim Khan conducted domestic and foreign policies on lines similar to those of his murdered brother. Neutrality towards Britain and the Soviet Union was espoused, while ties to Muslim nations were actively cultivated. A distant industrialized power was sought as a way to support economic development, and foreign relations as a whole were directed to create a careful and secure policy for fiscal growth.[167]

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[164] Ibid, 306, citing the Statute Regarding Identity Cards, Regulations for Passports and the Law Regarding Citizenship.

[165] Adamec, 195-8.

[166] IOL L/PS/12/1321, *A Survey of Anglo-Afghan Relations, Part II*, 17.

[167] Gregorian, 375.

Economic Policies: The Bank-i Milli and the Rise of the Monopoly System

Gregorian notes that one of the most significant contributions of the Afghan monarchy in the first half of the twentieth-century was the way it organized and directed the national economy. It was active by: "introducing industries, encouraging the development of a modern banking system, and promoting the formation of joint-stock companies" which apparently led to capitalist development and the creation of a middle class.[168] In contrast to the predominant view that this economic development was positive for all, this thesis argues that some of these innovations were also destructive. They led to the impoverishment and persecution of more marginal members of society -- minorities and refugees.

One month after gaining the throne, Nadir Shah sought to implement a nationalistic economic policy. He turned to 'Abd al-Majid Khan Zabuli (1902-98), a Herati native who had established the first joint-stock company in 1924 to facilitate commerce with the Soviet Union. Between 1925 and 1929 'Abd al-Majid lived in Moscow, as an exporter of Afghan goods to the Soviet Union. During Kalakani's reign this trade was devastated, and his business suffered. When Nadir came to power, 'Abd al-Majid returned to Afghanistan and the king immediately asked him to create a plan to restore Afghanistan's economy.[169] According to 'Abd al-Majid many years later, Nadir Shah told him that:

> 'Today we see in our own country export, import, transportation, brokerage and everything else are all done by foreigners; only shopkeeping is left for our own people. This situation is intolerable and we must have our own nationals engaged in all these activities throughout the country. We must find a way to cut off the hands of the foreigners.' [170]

These lines are significant, and remained a goal far beyond Nadir's short reign.

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[168] Ibid, 397.

[169] Maxwell J. Fry, *The Afghan Economy: Money, Finance, and the Critical Constraints to Economic Development* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 82-3.

[170] Ibid, 83 citing Report of Bank Millie's Activities in 1344 [1965] (Kabul: Bank Millie, 1345).

'Abd al-Majid certainly took this charge to heart, and spent most of his working life pursuing this task. Nadir wanted ethnic Afghans to control the export trade, and "centralize the sources of capital badly needed to start banking, industrial, and commercial enterprises."[171] 'Abd al-Majid Khan stayed in Kabul for three months and prepared an economic plan. He thought of starting a bank, but the Minister of Justice was against this idea. Consequently, Nadir acquiesed to the demands of the religious establishment. The rest of 'Abd al-Majid's proposal was approved.

Instead of a bank, a trading company was established in 1930. Its official name was *Shirkat-i Sahami-i-Afghan*, the Afghan Joint Stock Company, though it was commonly referred to as *Shirkat Ashami* (in its plural form).[172] The official rationale for its creation centered on the fall of the Afghani as well as the general weakened state of the economy.[173] Officials decided that local Hindu moneychangers and informal bankers were to blame, rather than the recent internal strife and global depression. As mentioned above, they were also convinced that foreigners were running Afghanistan's economy. Hindu businessmen were told that they could not continue to exchange currency, and were given three days to close their businesses. This ultimatum was unsuccessful, and was disregarded by the Hindu community who knew that no one could replace them.[174] However, by June 1931, another new, semi-private trading agency was established that was far harder to ignore. The *Shirkat-i Islah* had a large scope. It was founded as a semi-official trading agency that claimed to speak for the entire commercial community of Afghanistan, just as the Shirkat Ashami did. The contemporary *Journal of Commerce* stated that the *Shirkat-i Islah*'s "chief trade will be in wools, furs and skins, particularly astrachan."[175] The position of entrepreneurial minorities, both Hindus and Jews, remained secure for several more years until the Shirkat Ashami's power became firmly ensconced.

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[171] Peter G. Franck, "Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan," in *Middle East Journal* 3: 4 (October 1949): 430-31.

[172] Fry, xii.

[173] Between 1930 and 1932, the Afghani fell from 2.17 to 3.4 against the Indian rupee. IOL L/PS/12/1552, Economic Report of 1937, Annex D, The Organisation of Industry and Trade, 357.

[174] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Maconachie (Kabul) to Arthur Henderson (London), 12 March 1931, 563.

[175] IOL L/PS/12/1552, "Afghan Trading Agency" clipping from *Journal of Commerce,* 3 June 1931, 556.

The Shirkat Ashami, along with many other joint stock companies that followed, was established as a public-private initiative, with the Afghan government generally contributing less than half of the resources, while the private sector provided the rest.[176] In this case, however, the government provided sixty-eight per cent of the initial capital (1.7 million of 2.5 million afghanis). Most individual investors were wealthy businessmen and high government officials, whose occupational and personal interests coincided. Shirkat Ashami's goals were the regulation of international trade and development of Afghanistan's economy. 'Abd al-Majid along with other prominent Herati merchants, were granted the monopoly over the import of sugar, petrol, and autos, as well as the export of cotton, wool, and karakul. After the Ashami Company was established, 'Abd al-Majid travelled to Berlin to conduct his own affairs, though he was called back to Kabul in late 1931, as the trading company was proceeding fitfully. This time, 'Abd al-Majid insisted upon the foundation of a national bank.[177]

The Shirkat Ashami was reorganized into the Afghan National Bank or *Bank-i Milli-i Afghan* in 1932. Its primary stated goal was to correct a negative balance of trade – over forty-one million afghanis in March. The bank only became a fully active presence in the spring of 1933 when it was fortified by 7.1 million afghanis, sufficient capital for national endeavours. The term Shirkat Ashami continued to be used throughout the 1930s, and appears to have maintained some separate functions, especially in the karakul trade, even after it was officially subsumed under the Bank-i Milli. Sometimes it is difficult to determine which organisation is discussed in the primary sources, as the terms are used in an overlapping manner especially in the 1930s. At the least, the Ashami Company was the most powerful shirkat during the 1930s, trading especially in karakul, but its name may have continued to refer to the trading section of the Afghan National Bank beyond 1932. By the 1940s, the place of the Bank-i Milli as the centre for monopolisation and national economic policies was firmly established.

[176] Dupree, 1973, 472-73.
[177] Fry, 83.

Preceeding Afghanistan, Iran had established a Bank-i Milli in 1927. It functioned both as a state and a commercial bank, issuing currency and directing financial policies. Amin Banani notes that German experts helped to turn the Iranian National Bank into an avenue for economic development and capital formation.[178] Afghanistan's National Bank widened its scope throughout 1933. By mid-June it was reported as having secured the monopoly of issuing bank notes, importing sugar and oil products. Also, it was given the "first option to exploit mines or to establish industrial institutions," and the bank managed "[a]ll Government dealings in machinery, drugs, metals, textiles and various sorts of tea."[179] The Bank-i Milli was also in charge of the exchange policy and the purchase and sales of bills.[180] By July, it gained the "custody of Government treasure ... and all Government revenue [was] paid into it."[181] In August, the bank formally controlled all other joint-stock or monopoly companies.[182] The British Consul in Kabul, Richard Maconachie reported that the company aspired to "an almost complete monopoly of the export and import trade of the country." It received Muhammad Hashim Khan's support because of the argument that the profits of European and Indian middlemen would be eliminated.[183] At the company's annual meeting in 1934 'Abd al-Majid Khan (Zabuli) explained that this economic crisis had "led to the depreciation of Afghan currency, and ... made it imperative that Afghanistan should embark on a new commercial policy with all possible haste."[184] At first the company's capital was set at ten million Afghanis but this was soon raised to thirty-five million; half derived from government funds and half from merchants.[185]

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[178] Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran: 1921-1941* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 119.

[179] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Diary no.24 for week ending 16 June 1933, 539.

[180] PRO FO 371 17198, Enclosure to Kabul despatch no. 69, 21 June 1933, 339.

[181] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Kabul Military Attaché's Diary no.28 for week ending 21 July 1933, 442.

[182] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Clipping from *The Financial News*, "Central Bank in Afghanistan: Functions of a New Institution," 30 August 1933, 438.

[183] IOL L/PS/12/1552, R.R. Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 29 November 1932, 551.

[184] PRO/FO/371/18,244, Diary no.26 for week ending 28 June 1934, reporting 'Abd al-Majid Khan's words at the Ashami Company's annual meeting, 328.

[185] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Economic Report of 1937, Annex D, The Organisation of Industry and Trade. Much of the information contained herein comes from an interview with Abdul Majid Khan, 357-58.

Wealthy Indian and Jewish merchants contributed resources as well. The Afghan National Bank was entrusted with all governmental purchases in Europe and India, and had the right to "supersede the various distributing agencies [now] operating between the foreign manufacturer and the Afghan retailer."[186] In other words, it gained formal control of the entire import trade.

Maxwell Fry, who published a forty-year study of Afghanistan's economy, states that 'Abd al-Majid's goals were congruent with those of Amanullah, for he wanted an economic plan and a national bank "which could issue paper currency, provide credit and, above all, form the nucleus for the development of entrepreneurial and managerial talent in the country."[187] All of Afghanistan's fledgling official economic efforts were enmeshed during the 1930s and 1940s, and the career of 'Abd al-Majid became synonymous with the monopolisation system. 'Abd al-Majid was undaunted by religious proscriptions, and was able to circumvent the ulama's opposition to the establishment of a bank. Loans were provided without interest, but the lender had to purchase a stamp, called a *pulé tiket* (literally: money ticket) which was "attached to each repayment receipt thus providing the bank with profit rather than with interest."[188] *Bank-i Milli* established branches in Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-i Sharif, Khanabad, Jalalabad, Quetta, and Peshawar, and later representatives were placed in Karachi, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, London, Paris, and Berlin. The bank was also granted concessions, including extraordinary monopoly rights, which allowed it blanket control of the government's business interests. It could "issue drafts payable at government treasuries," held the monopoly on the "purchase of foreign currency, bullion, and government imports [and] it was given the first option on the development of the country's natural resources."[189] In 1937, it also gained the right to export one-third of the country's karakul crop.[190] With such widespread powers, the bank paid a twenty-eight per cent dividend to its shareholders in its first year. In 1932, 'Abd al-Majid

[186] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan, 1932, 549.
[187] Fry, 83.
[188] Ibid, 83-4.
[189] Gregorian, 314-5.
[190] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Economic Report of 1937, Annex D: The Organisation of Industry and Trade, 357-8. While in London, 'Abd al-Majid Khan made this statement.

Khan also completed an Overall Economic Development Plan which was accepted by the Afghan government. It remained in place until 1938, and it sought to: compile financial data, encourage domestic and international trade, improve health, education, and the system of communications, facilitate the development of industry, and reform agricultural techniques.[191]

The Bank-i Milli flourished throughout the 1930s, until the bank and its prominent shareholders were suspected of reaping too much personal gain. The monopoly system was devastating for Afghanistan's remaining non-Muslim citizens. Hindus and Jews were deeply involved in mercantile activities and the export trade. Nadir Shah's avowed purpose (or that of 'Abd al-Majid Khan) was to "cut off the hands of the foreigners," and if foreigners were viewed as non-Afghan citizens and residents of Afghanistan, then this goal was accomplished.[192] Both *dhimmi* communities, as well as Soviet refugees living in the north, were harmed by the policies conceived and directed by 'Abd al-Majid Khan. Refugees fleeing Stalinist policies were viewed as a potential threat to Afghanistan's stability, and were often treated harshly, especially those who were not Muslim. The political threat and economic challenge posed gave 'Abd al-Majid Khan an excuse to pursue discriminative political action through the guise of economic development.

[191] Gregorian, 315.

[192] Fry, 83 citing *Report of Bank Millie's Activities in 1344* [1965] (Kabul: Bank Millie, 1345 [1966]).

Chapter Four:

Northern Afghanistan's Soviet Refugee Crisis (1932 - 1936)

It is but rarely that one hears of the sufferings which Jews endure in several Asiatic countries ... Only occasional fragments reach us from these countries, and only by piecing them together do we learn the little we know.... [1]

Synopsis

Chapter 4 examines the refugee crisis in Afghanistan between the years 1932 and 1936. Individuals fled the Soviet Union before this time, yet by the early thirties, numbers began to increase. This was accompanied by a harsh response from the Afghan government, who began to see new Soviet refugees as a menace to national security and stability. Consequently, domestic policies were quickly reshaped to minimise these perceived risks. The following pages examine the situation of Bukharan Jewish refugees in detail, as their treatment directly influenced the course of Afghanistani Jewish history. Muslim residents and officials saw Jewish refugees and citizens in an increasingly similar manner. As the plights of these communities worsened, their fates were wedded. By 1934, the Afghan government wanted to deport both the Bukharan and Afghanistani Jewish communities, but the British intervened. This was not because of altruistic or humanitarian concerns. Rather, the British agreed with Afghanistan's view of the Jewish community as potential Bolshevik agents and did not want them to relocate to India. Still further measures were enacted which barred Afghanistani Jews from the northern tier of the country, and revoked their passports throughout Europe and Asia. These actions were the first and most decisive steps that led to the demise of the Jewish community.

[1] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, "Tragedy in Afghanistan," *Jewish Daily Post*, 15 July 1935, 122.

Causes of the Refugee Crisis

When the Soviet Union was established, it provided a source of inspiration for Amanullah Khan, who felt that Lenin could help Afghanistan gain independence from Britain. In fact, the Soviet Union recognised its southern neighbour one month after Amanullah declared independence on 28 February 1919.[2] Both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union could unite in their opposition to European imperialism in Asia.[3] This honeymoon was short, because of the Soviet Union's capture of Central Asian territory. While the Bolsheviks allowed the amir Sayyid 'Alim Khan to rule Bukhara, they also declared the Czarist *Turkestan krai* to be the Soviet Republic of Turkestan on 1 May 1918. Two years later, in the late summer of 1920, Red Army units led by Mikhail Frunze overthrew Sayyid 'Alim Khan and declared the Soviet People's Republic of Bukhara.[4] Amanullah considered this an act of treachery that endangered his nation's fledgling independence. He began actively to aid the deposed Bukharan amir and his army. By the summer of 1922, Amanullah had to put an end to these efforts because of the punitive measures taken against the local population in Central Asia, especially in the Ferghana valley. According to the historian Mikhail Volodarsky, this included "destroying crops, blocking wells, sabotaging irrigation systems, [and] uprooting orchards."[5] In 1924, the Central Asian territories were divided again, this time into the Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and (in 1929) Tajikistan.[6]

By the early 1930s, a large number of Central Asian refugees were fleeing into Afghan territory. Under the leadership of Nadir Shah, Afghanistan signed a border agreement with the Soviet Union that created a corps of border commissars in 1932. While some Central Asians settled in northern Afghanistan during the Russian Revolution, numbers grew rapidly, because of actions against kulaks, or rich peasants,

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[2] Mikhail Volodarsky, *The Soviet Union and its Southern Neighbours: Iran and Afghanistan 1917 - 1933* (Ilford, Essex: Frank Cass, 1994), 121-23.

[3] Ibid, 125.

[4] Vitaly Naumkin, ed. *Bukhara: Caught in Time: Great Photographic Archives.* Compiled by Andrei G. Nedvetsky. (Reading: Garnet, 1993), 14; and Michael Zand, "Notes on the Culture of the Non-Ashkenazi Jewish Communities Under Soviet Rule," in eds. Yaacov Ro'i and Avi Beker, *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 400.

[5] Volodarsky, 128-9, and 136.

[6] Naumkin, 14.

and the collectivisation policies during the first five-year plan (1928-32).[7] These measures wrought havoc with agriculture and caused widespread famine. For example, between 1925 and 1932, approximately two million, or half of the Kazakh people died.[8] Approximately 60,000 Soviet refugees reached Afghanistan. Volodarsky states:

> They were well received by the Afghan Government. The Muslims were spread around the country, were given land, and were freed from taxes for the next three years. Refugees from the European part of the U.S.S.R. and Bokharan Jews were helped to reach India, whence the Jews tried to reach Palestine.[9]

While this information may have been accurate for the beginning of the 1930s, constant pressure throughout the decade changed Afghanistan's willingness to aid displaced communities. As Afghanistan faced continuing waves of refugees, its resources were overwhelmed, and policies became harsher, particularly for non-Muslims.

Consequences for Central Asian Jewry

> During the seventy years of communist rule no fewer than thirty million people, possibly even more, perished in the Soviet Union. In addition millions were imprisoned, exiled, or persecuted in other ways. This is an absolute historical record.[10]

As a consequence of war, revolution, collectivisation, and purges, a stream of refugees began to flow across the southern borders of the Soviet Union. Sometimes entire villages would attempt to escape together. At the Nineteenth Zionist Congress in Lucerne, Abraham Emanueli represented Bukharan Jewry. Actually, he was from Afghanistan, which is indicative of the close ties between the two communities.[11] He

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[7] Volodarsky, 150.

[8] See Kazakhstan's official web site for further information: www.president.kz, under the history section, then chose the historical calendar. Downloaded on 14 November 2002.

[9] Volodarsky, 173-4.

[10] Anatoly Khazanov, *After the USSR* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 71.

[11] Interview with Itzhak Bezalel, Jerusalem, 4 July 2001.

told the congress that approximately twenty per cent of the 40,000 Bukharan Jews in Central Asia had starved to death or been killed.[12]

An eye-witness account sent from Mazar-i-Sharif provides rare detail about events inside the Soviet Union. As such, it is quoted at length. In the autumn of 1933, refugees wrote to Jews in the West, explaining their reasons for leaving Central Asia.[13]

> This "Galuth"[exile] surpasses all other persecutions we have suffered in all our history and everyday finds things going from bad to worse. We pray God to relieve us... Lately a decree was ruthlessly enforced compelling everyone to give up all his money and jewelry. The Ogpu [secret police] not being satisfied with the results, tortured with all kinds of inconceivable machinery and as a result, many people have died and their bodies have been thrown into the valleys where dogs prey on their mortal remains. In the markets it is impossible to find even one pound of wheat or flour and many people eat the residue of cotton seed, as a result of which even many well to do people have died hideously. If the once wealthy people have suffered, woe to those that are in need. Some who still have strength left, run away to Afghanistan and Persia. Many of these have fallen victims at the hands of the frontier guards, who confiscate their belongings and send them away to remote places, Siberia or deserts, where, without even bread and water, they perish. In short, a dog has some value in Russia, whereas our Brethren have no value whatever.[14]

Millions did not survive Stalin's murderous rule. Of those who did, Turkmen, inhabitants of the Ferghana Valley, Bukharan Muslims and Jews, Georgians, Russians, Ukrainians, and many others arrived in Persia or Afghanistan with only the clothes on their backs.[15]

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[12] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Letter from Abraham Emanueli, Delegate of the Bukharan Jews from Labour Faction of the Nineteenth Zionist Congress, Lucerne, 20 August 1935.

[13] Most Jewish refugees probably left from Uzbekistan. The principal cities inhabited by Bukharan Jews were (in decending order): Samarkand, Tashkent, Bukhara, Kokand, Andizhan, Margelan, Khatirchi, and Sharisabz in Uzbekistan, but only Dushanbe (Stalinabad) in Tajikistan. Mikhail Zand, "Bukharan Jewish Culture Under Soviet Rule" in *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 9: 2 (1979): 15.

[14] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, "From the Refugees in Afghanistan", Mazar-x-Sharif, 15 N-n-hem (?) [56]93 [late summer 1933]. The Board of Deputies' records for these events are solely loose papers in manila folders. The title of each document will be recorded as it was written by the author/s. For example, while the standardized spelling for Mazar-i-Sharif does not contain an 'x', I have preserved this as a way to facilitate document recognition. All spelling and punctuation remains as in the original.

[15] In the 1980s, the Soviet government was shocked by the return of Kazakh nomads from China who still possessed Soviet passports from the 1920s. I am grateful to Dr. Shirin Akiner for this account.

Afghan Response to Refugees

In June 1932, local Afghan officers were instructed to return refugees to the Soviet Union or deport them to Xinjiang.[16] The earliest action against the refugees appears to be a *firman* ordering Soviet Jews to be interned in Kabul en route south to Jallalabad and Kandahar, while all new arrivals should be deported.[17] Often, they may not have made it all the way to Kandahar, but rather most settled in Kabul. The British Chargé d'Affaires explained that the Afghan government viewed every Soviet refugee as "a potential spy." Almost every consequent governmental action towards Soviet, and especially non-Muslim, refugees was based on this perception. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Faiz Muhammad, clarified current refugee policy by telling the British Minister, W. Kerr Fraser-Tytler, that his government "disliked and feared all Russian refugees and were it possible to do so would return all of them to Russian territory."[18] Despite these sentiments, he felt that Afghans were bound by Islamic law that stipulated one could not refuse asylum to *Muhajirun*.[19] These restrictions led to a hierarchical system for managing Soviet refugees.

By 1932, the major distinctions in policies toward Muslim and non-Muslim refugees were in place. It took an additional year for measures regarding Jews to be clearly stipulated. By the end of October 1933, the British were still uncertain about Afghan governmental attitudes towards Jewish refugees.[20] At the initial stages of the crisis, the Jews had an intermediate position – treated worse than Central Asian Muslims, but better than Georgian or Russian Christians. While Jewish refugees were subjected to discrimination, the Afghans may have been familiar with the Jewish

[16]IOL R/12/61 513/I, Note from Major Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) 30 June 1932, 90.

[17] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Aminoff, Azizollah, Mirzoeff, Yadgaroff, Poteliakhoff to Laski (President of the Board of Deputies), 25 September 1933.

[18] IOL R/12/61 513/I, Despatch from Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), 1 November 1932, 155 (or 125, as there are two different numbering systems).

[19] Ibid. See also: Astri Suhrke "Refugees and Asylum in the Muslim World," in ed. Robin Cohen *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 457-60.

[20] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Mallam (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 October 1933, 310.

economic contribution, and felt less politically threatened by the co-religionists of a long-resident *dhimmi* population. Muslim and Jewish refugees joined ethnically similar groups in northern Afghanistan, while Christian refugees had no contact through religious affiliation. They may have been viewed more as a direct political challenge. Soon this situation intensified, and by the end of 1933, the British military attaché in Kabul reported that 'Russian' [Soviet, mainly Bukharan] Jewish refugees were to be immediately returned to the Soviet Union, and "European Russians (Kafqazis) [were] to be sent to Chinese Turkestan."[21]

Muslim Refugees

Muslims fleeing the U.S.S.R. in the 1920s and early 1930s due to religious persecution were allowed to settle in northern Afghanistan, after a background check to ensure they were "genuine refugees, on whom no suspicion of espionage rested."[22] Central Asian Jewish merchants in London told the Board of Deputies that Muslims were settled on the land, and allowed to establish homes and open businesses.[23] Despite a more lenient treatment, Muslim refugees also concerned Afghan officials. The British military attaché in Kabul reported that while *Muhajirun* were allowed into the country, they could not reside within thirty miles of the frontier, and weapons found on their person were to be confiscated by the Ministry of War.[24] By 1938, the government was alarmed by the influx of 16,000 new Muslim refugees from the Soviet Union, and considered them a potential military threat, which prompted the order of fifty light tanks from Germany.[25] Unfortunately, British archives provide very little information as to the fate of Muslim refugees. This material must be obtained from other sources.[26] While the dominant Pashtun majority discriminated against this group, they were more integrated into Afghanistan's Sunni community.

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[21] IOL L/PS/ 12/1660, Coll3/93, Diary no.52 for week ending 28 December 1933, by R.M.M. Lockhart (British Military Attaché, Kabul), 243.

[22] IOL R/12/61 513/I, 155

[23] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Aminoff et al. to Laski, 25 September 1933.

[24] PRO FO/371/18243, Diary No.52 for week ending 28 December 1933, by R.M.M. Lockhart (British Military Attaché, Kabul), 61.

[25] IOL R/12/164 42/43/N, File "H": Rheinmetale Borsig (R.M.B.) telegram no. 94, from Pilger (German ambassador, Kabul) to Berlin, 13 December 1938, 121.

[26] See, for example, Audrey Shalinsky's work on emigrants from the Ferghana Valley in Kunduz, *Central Asian Emigres in Afghanistan: Problems of Religious and Ethnic Identity*, Occasional Paper

Christian Refugees

Christian refugees were viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the government of Afghanistan, as they could be tied to European powers, and therefore pose another threat. These refugees were generally allowed to choose if they wanted to return to the USSR, or be deported to China via the Wakhan corridor.[27] The British Chargé d'Affaires protested these measures, saying they caused innocent, non-Bolshevik men to die from either draconian alternative. Perhaps one example may help to demonstrate the position of the refugees. George Bars, a homeless Russian teenager, fled the Soviet Union in 1931. In Quetta, the police interrogated him about his journey to India. When he crossed the Persian frontier, he was arrested. During his interrogation, Bars said that: "the Persians wanted to send me back to Russia, but I lay myself on the ground and told them as my return meant sure death, I would rather be shot dead here than return to Russia."[28] This young man was a fortunate, early refugee particularly as the Persian border guards could be more lenient than the Afghans. The police gave him a goatskin to carry water, and set him free with instructions to walk to India, while keeping well away from Persian posts.[29] Though Bars never entered Afghanistan, his story clearly shows the alternatives faced by Russian refugees. In another example from the same file, the British representative in Mashhad reported that a Jewish Moscovite told them that his three travelling companions were shot to death by Soviet border guards *after* entering Persia. The British concluded that the Persian border guards must have directed the Soviets to the refugees' house.[30] Imprisonment, deportation, deprivation and death at any stage along the journey were commonplace. Similar events certainly occurred in Afghanistan, although they were recorded with less frequency.

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no.19 (New York: Afghanistan Council, December 1979); and Long Years of Exile: Central Asian Refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994).

[27] IOL R/12/61, 513/I, H.A.F. Metcalfe (New Delhi) to R.H. Hoare (Teheran) 20 October 1932, 155.

[28] Ibid, Letter from the Superintendant of Police, Quetta – Pishin and Sibi, 23 July 1931 regarding Bars, George – Russian, 42.

[29] Ibid, 43.

[30] IOL R/12/61, 513/I, Report from British Representative in Meshed, 28 October 1931, entitled: The Conditions of Russian Refugees in Persia, 136.

Russian Christian refugees may have been the most vulnerable group in Afghanistan. They were immediately suspected of being Soviet agents. As they had few who would protect their interests, the Afghan government could treat them with less concern for the potential international repercussions. Conversely, the Afghans had to be the most cautious when Western legations became interested in the plight of these very refugees. One particularly unusual incident involved a Mennonite family in Afghanistan. The Germans and the British both wanted to represent their interests. This family entered Afghanistan with Czarist passports and the two male wage earners began to work as motor mechanics for the Afghan government, sometime after Stalin gained power. When they decided to leave Kabul for India or Canada, their passports were not returned, nor were they issued with Afghan papers. Even their request for Nansen (refugee) passports was refused. This family was threatened with deportation to the Soviet Union.[31] Fortunately, they appear to have survived and eventually settled with relatives in Manitoba.

Jewish Refugees: Petitioning for Assistance

As explained, the Afghan government clearly framed its refugee policy upon religious distinctions. Consequently, Bukharan Jews were a particularly vulnerable community, because of prejudice suffered along both sides of the border. Abraham Emanueli (who changed his name from Emanuelson after making 'aliya in the early 1930s) explained to the Board of Deputies that: "To-day every Jewish refugee from Russia is believed to be a Bolshevist propagandist. At the same time ... the Bokhara Jews in particular are regarded as industrial capitalists and suspected of hate towards the principle of communism."[32] As the refugees crossed the Amu Darya southwards, the characterisations about them were reversed.

At the inception of this crisis, the Union of Boukharian Jews in Palestine urged prominent members of the London Bukharan community to petition the British

[31] PRO FO/371/17187, Letter from Maconachie (H.M. Minister, Kabul) to John Simon (London), 26 May 1933, 141-42.

[32] BoD ACC/C12/4, Abraham Emanueli (Binyamina) to Herbert Samuel (London), 28 January 1935.

government. Soon after, Bukharan Jewish fur traders in Britain began to lobby the Board of Deputies. They hoped that British intervention could convince the Afghan government to allow Jews to pass through Afghanistan while in transit to Palestine.[33] Moshe Shallit of the Jewish Agency (*Sochnut*) also wrote to encourage the Board's intervention. He alluded to:

> the terrible plight of our Brethren [for] those who escaped into Afghanistan have been arrested by the Afghan Militia and imprisoned under most harrowing conditions. At present there are over 200 of these refugees in prisons in Ankhoi, Mazar, and Achja -- their wives and children being entirely without support.[34]

This account corresponds with what is known about non-Muslim Soviet refugees at this time from British observers in Afghanistan and Persia, andsometimes in India. The refugees were initially placed under arrest in order to allow queries to be made regarding their antecedents, ensuring that they were *bona fide* refugees, and not Bolshevik agents. Muslim refugees may have also been imprisoned, but perhaps not with the same regularity as other groups.[35]

Certain restrictions against Jews in Afghanistan, over and above those imposed upon other religious communities, are clearly in evidence.[36] One prominent fur merchant in London told the Joint Foreign Committee[37] that the governments of Persia and Afghanistan "have taken care of the non-Jewish emigrants, settled them on the land, and assisted them to find some kind of livelihood." This was not the case for Jewish refugees who were denied aid, and not allowed to work.[38] Emanueli confirmed that: "every line of trade and commerce is closed to them."[39] By December 1933,

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[33] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Committee of the Union of Boukharian Jews in Palestine to Bukharan community in London, 11 July 1932; and Assistant Secretary of Board of Deputies (Brotman) to d'Avigdor-Goldsmid (London), 28 July 1932.

[34] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Moshe Shallit to the Board of Deputies, 13 September 1933.

[35] IOL R/12/61, 513/I, 146. A.W. Davis, British Consul at Tabriz to R.H. Hoare (Teheran), 25 May 1932.

[36] BoD ACC/3121/C12/4, Abraham Emanueli to Herbert Samuel, 28 January 1935.

[37] The Joint Foreign Committee was an organisation that represented the Anglo-Jewish Association and the Board of Deputies of British Jews in assisting Jewish commuities abroad.

[38] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Kestenbaum to Joint Foreign Committee, 4 February 1935.

[39] BoD ACC/3121/12/4, Emanueli to Samuel, 28 January 1935.

Afghanistani Jews expressed anxiety to Central Asian merchants in London about the refugees' continued survival. One anonymous author wrote that: "the position now of the 2,000 Jewish Refugees from Russia is appalling as ever. No bread to eat, no clothes to wear and shelters from the rigours of the weather. I do not know what is going to happen to all these sufferers."[40] Along with restrictions against work, forced relocation from Andkhoi, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other towns in Afghan Turkestan to Herat and finally Kabul, the refugees were subjected to lesser regulations, such as being forbidden from using the public baths. These were meant to humiliate.

One letter from a Bukharan Jewish refugee in Kabul describes the suffering of this community in great detail, and is worth quoting at length.

> After three months by order of the Afghan Government they drove us from Ankhoi to Kabul. They brought us all to a big warehouse[41] and told us that we have to live there. The plac[e] is full of rats and mice and the conditions inside are unbearable. ... We have no home to live in, no food for our wives and children, and no winter clothing to protect ourselves in this cold weather. We beg of you to help us ... Otherwise we shall certainly [die] of hunger and cold.
>
> In Kabul the Government does not allow us to do any kind of work. It is impossible for us to write fo [of] all of our sufferings. Our wives and children are not left in peace. We are worse off than the Jews in Germany. Were it possible for us to film our sufferings and miseries and show them to you, you would s[u]rely pity us then. Do not forget that God created you and made you rich to help us the poor and the crestfallen. ...
>
> We are sending you this letter from India as we are afraid to send it from Kabul.
>
> We beg of you not to print this letter in the newspapers, because if our enemies hear of it we would be in a much worse position.[42]

There is a long tradition of beleaguered communities writing for help. For example, the Alliance Israelite Universelle's archives hold many calligraphied letters in

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[40] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, received and translated by G. Mirzoeff to Zaiman, 20 December 1933.

[41] According to May Schinasi, this could be a caravanserai. Personal correspondence, April 2003.

[42] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, letter from Yosef --- (Kabul), 13 December 1934. After leaving Afghanistan, this group continued to be traumatized by their experiences, and remained poorer and more isolated than other groups of Jews from Afghanistan in the West. (Author's discussion with Shulamit Ambalu at *Beit Klal Yisrael* (London) on 4 December 1998.)

Judeo-Persian. They are often written by a scribe, and signed with dozens of personal seals, in order to show the number of families with an interest in the matter. In some ways, these seals are like those currently used in East Asia.[43] Most letters sent from Iran and Afghanistan in the 1930s fall into this pattern. Even when composed in English or French, they are written in a set formula, and tens of Hebrew signatures close each appeal. Letters written by Afghanistani Jews in London also follow this format.

This letter is strikingly different from many others kept in the Board of Deputies' archives. Yosef's appeal is as a solitary voice. While he writes on behalf of others, it is not a communal appeal. The author's voice is clear, and he is angry. It does not conform to a standardised pattern. His intended audience is only "Dear" with the rest of the line left empty. In some ways, this letter may be one of the most extraordinary documents in the Board of Deputies' archives on Afghanistan. It appeals to technology, and arrived at their offices typewritten in English, but signed in Hebrew script. Yosef includes his full name, which appears to be Haj ... Hana ... Yosef, though the handwriting is very difficult to decypher. Files in the Board of Deputies were often translated into English, especially when they arrived in Hebrew or Yiddish, while letters in French and German were not. This document differs, as it was translated into English in Kabul, or more likely, in Peshawar or Bombay. Letters were never presented to the Board in Judeo-Persian without a translation. Perhaps this is another reason why the Boukharian Jews' Association in London provided such a vital link.

Viewing Refugees as Spies: Afghan and British Perceptions

In January 1934, the Afghan Minister in London, 'Ali Muhammad told the president of the Board of Deputies, Neville J. Laski, that his government was anxious for the refugees to leave, and "was providing every facility for their migration

[43] For an earlier example of a communal letter requesting assistance, see AIU microfilm Iran I/C/3 bobine 4, letter from Kachani Jewish community sent to AIU (Paris) in 1912.

elsewhere."[44] Laski also learned that the Afghan government threatened to deport all refugees back to the Soviet Union unless the British would furnish them with visas.[45]

The British government also considered Bukharan Jewish refugees as potential Bolshevik agents. On the same day that Laski met the Afghan Minister in London, Moshe Shertok of the Jewish Agency received a curious letter from the High Commissioner in Jerusalem. It stated that among the Jewish refugees in Meshhed, many were active members of the Comintern. The letter went on to say that due to the Jewish refugees arriving in Palestine from Persia, Bukhara, and Afghanistan, the High Commissioner wanted Shertok to be informed of the situation. Despite this, the British official cautioned that he could not confirm these suspicions of espionage.[46]

British and Afghan attitudes towards the Soviet, especially Jewish, refugees were sometimes similar. Both governments feared the refugees because they could check neither their intentions nor 'character.'[47] In this vein, the British Minister to Kabul (1930-35), Sir Richard Maconachie received instructions from Simla to stop Jews entering India if he felt they might be Soviet agents. A British official in Simla, Olaf Caroe told Maconachie that the precautions taken up to that point were insufficient, and "recommendations given by the Jews' references in Peshawar were generally valueless."[48] This was ascribed to the "well-known solidarity that exists between Jews," which invalidated this system.[49] British and Afghan governmental officials shared a similar mistrust of Bukharan Jewish refugees.

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[44] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Memorandum, 3 January 1934.

[45] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Kestenbaum to Laski, 4 January 1934.

[46] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, J. Hathorn Hall to Moshe Shertok (both in Jerusalem), 3 January 1934.

[47] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Maconachie (Kabul) to Zaiman (London), sent 30 November 1933 (received 24 December 1933).

[48] Both quotations from: IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, O.K. Caroe (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul) 7 June 1935, 124.

[49] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Despatch to Kabul, 26 September 1934, 167. These instructions went on to say, "Experience has shown that in nine cases out of ten the Jew resident ... gives a favourable character to the applicant."

Comparing Refugee Policy in Afghanistan and Persia

The situation in Afghanistan serves as a contrast with events inside Persia, a nation that was also managing a very similar refugee population. When refugees arrived in Persia they were imprisoned, just as in Afghanistan. This was instituted as a way to establish "that they are not OGPU agents masquerading as refugees."[50] By 1933, over 1,000 Bukharan Jewish refugees arrived in Mashhad, out of a total refugee population which appears to have been 2,000.[51] Officials in Khorasan province wanted to expel Soviet Jewish refugees. In some cases, they succeeded. According to G. Mirzoeff, president of the Boukharian Jews Association in London, by June 1934, one fifth of the Jewish refugee families in Mashhad had been dispersed to "outlying and remote places where they are unable to find any means of sustenance."[52] These severe actions were considerably mitigated by intervention of the *Jadid al-Islam* community in Mashhad, as in the 1850s. The *anusim* often helped Jews in the region during times of crisis or famine, as they were intimately aware of the difficulty of maintaining a Jewish identity. Due to their outward acceptance of Islam, the Mashhadis were often more financial successful, because they were subject to fewer regulations and taxes. On *Erev Rosh Hashana*, 21 September 1933, refugees in Mashhad wrote to London and described how they had been initially arrested and were currently facing expulsion. Already this measure had been delayed a month due to the intervention of Haji Ibrahim Aminoff and other community leaders.[53] Perhaps prominent Jadids were able to postpone the order considerably longer, until the winter passed, when the refugees would be in less danger.

The expulsion order, or population transfer was enacted by the city police, who found the numbers of Jewish refugees to be too large, and decided to disperse them in rural areas. By February 1934, eight hundred Jews still remained in Mashhad, while

[50] IOL R/12/61, 513/I, A.W.Davis (British Consul at Tabriz) to R.H. Hoare (Teheran), 25 May 1932, 146.

[51] AIU Iran II C 4 bobine 5, M. Daoud (Mashhad) to M. Ezra, 28 September 1933.

[52] BoD ACC/3121/E2/128, G.Mirzoeff, president of Boukharian Jews' Association, London to Zaiman, secretary of Joint Foreign Commitee, 13 June 1934.

[53] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, communal letter from refugees in Mashhad, *Erev Rosh Hashana* 5694, 21 September 1933.

ten families were sent to Kashan and another twenty to Shiraz. Those in Shiraz were deported from Bushire. Selim Nassi, principal of the Alliance Israëlite school in Teheran, reported that the refugees' misery increased in Kashan due to the "clicaneuse et avare" (cliquish and avaricious) Jewish community who would not help them at all. This may have been due to the stress that the Kashani community was already facing. Yet, it was common for Jews from Central Asia and Afghanistan to complain about the lack of assistance Persian Jewry extended to them.

The only exception to this trend appears to have been from the *Jadidim* who were more closely tied to their northern co-religionists, and maintained historical contacts. Curiously, the Jewish community with the most precarious political situation extended the most help to Soviet refugees. Nassi reported that the Mashhadi *anusim* community did all it could, but the refugees' needs were great and funds were insufficient. The situation was exacerbated as most of the refugees were merchants not artisans, and as such, they could not find similar employment in Mashhad.[54] In some ways, a hundred-year cycle was completed. After *Allah Daad* in 1839, Mashhadi Jewry found refuge in the Emirate of Bukhara, and supplemented the local population. Almost a century later, the effects of Stalin's purges brought some Bukharan Jews, perhaps even descendents of Mashhadis themselves, back into Persia. This time however, they did not tarry long, but hastened westward towards Palestine.

Sometimes, the power of the central government was strong enough to prevent regional authorities from conducting their own policy measures. As shown above, individuals were able to mitigate difficult situations as well. For example, Selim Nassi was a powerful advocate for Bukharan Jewish refugees. He addressed many prominent figures in Teheran, including the Persian Foreign Minister, British and French embassies. Through the efforts of this Alliance Israëlite employee, five hundred people were able to leave Persia, and another five hundred were allowed to stay in Teheran, Hamadan or Kermanshah, instead of being scattered about in distant villages. Nassi considerably softened the effects of the Mashhadi expulsion order. He was able to

[54]AIU Iran II C 4 –8 bobine 6, Nassi (Teheran) to Hias-Jca-Emigdirect (Paris), 23 February 1934.

obtain equipment for artisans to support themselves, as well as medical care for the infirm.[55] Selim Nassi truly behaved as a *nassi*, or a traditional Jewish communal advocate. His diplomatic skills proved very successful, though sadly, Nassi appears to have literally worked himself to death.

While the circumstances were similar in Afghanistan, the outcome of the Bukharan refugee crisis was considerably different. In Persia, the arrival of Bukharan refugees did not cause a backlash for the local commuity. The local inhabitants were not drawn into the refugee crisis, and they continued to be recognized as citizens. Persian Jews were considered a distinct group from the Bukharan refugees, while Afghan officials saw both Jewish communities in the same light. In Afghanistan, the populace was much more at the mercy of individual officials. Provincial governors had considerable autonomy to carry out their own population transfers, and other extra-legislative measures, while the community had little recourse. Occasionally, an extremely unpopular civil servant could be transferred in Afghanistan, but generally, the citizenry suffered under unjust officials.

The Expulsion of the Local Jewish Population

In Afghanistan, new policies affected the local and refugee populations alike. Refugees were not the only ones to be removed from the border area, although it took a year after the onset of the crisis for Afghanistani Jews to suffer a similar fate. In the summer of 1932, the Board of Deputies was warned about their precarious status. "Most of them are apparently living a 'Marrano' existence and might be harmed by the focusing of official attention on them."[56] By the autumn of 1933, this community was enmeshed in the refugee crisis.

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[55] AIU Iran I C 4 – 8, bobine 6, Nassi (Teheran) to Sassoon (AIU head in Bagdad), 28 February 1934.

[56] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Brotman to d'Avigdor-Goldsmid, 2 August 1932. 'Marrano' literally means pig, and was used to refer to the Converso community that emerged from the Spanish Inquisition.

A royal decree or *firman* was declared in September, several months before Nadir Shah's assassination that set out measures for dealing with Jewish, Muslim and Christian refugees. It stipulated: "Afghan Jews who have been removed from Afghan Turkestan are not to be allowed to reside within 30 miles of the frontier."[57] A telegram sent from Peshawar on 24 September 1933 to Central Asian Jewish merchants in London explained that the Afghan government ordered Jews living in the Andkhoi and Mazar-i-Sharif provinces to return to the towns of their birth within a month. (At this point, one must recall the peculiar domestic patterns of Afghanistani Jews in the early twentieth century. Women stayed in Herat or Kabul, while men travelled to the northern caravanserais, which later developed into larger settled communities. All those of adult age had been born in a city.[58]) Hence, the business interests of the community were being targeted. Jewish delegates travelled to Kabul to petition Muhammad Nadir Shah to retract this edict.[59] Their endeavours were unsuccessful. A letter sent one week later from Peshawar to London said that the representatives had not been able to petition Nadir Shah "as obstacles were encountered." From that point, the fates of the two Jewish communities, resident and refugee, merged. The letter explained further that:

> the order was referred to by the Minister of Commerce. The latter in turn informed them that the order issued by the Mazar and Ankhoi Governors was not known to him. It seems that he wishes to delay any attempt to have the Order repealed, and the GZERAH [evil decree] appears incompatible.[60]

The delegates returned home unsuccessfully. Without any reason provided, the Andkhoi Governor gave the Jewish community one month to return to the towns where they were born (for most this was Herat).[61] Unlike the situation in Persia, there were no external advocates for this community, and the order was not postponed.

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[57] PRO FO/371/18243, Diary no. 52 for week ending 28 December 1933, by R.M.M. Lockhart (Military Attaché, Kabul).

[58] Interview with Shulamit Ambalu, London, 4 December 1998.

[59] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, telegram from Peshawar, 24 September 1933.

[60] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, extract of letter from Peshawar, 1 October 1933.

[61] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Mirzoeff to Secretary of Joint Foreign Committee, Zaiman. 11 October 1933.

The northern governors issued the first orders for expulsion two months before Muhammad Nadir Shah was murdered. (As previously mentioned, the king was shot on 8 November 1933, the victim of a blood feud, during a prize-giving ceremony at the German school of Kabul.[62]) Despite a change of leadership, governmental policies did not shift radically. Rather, planned actions were implemented. At the end of November 1933, the Jews in Mazar-i-Sharif, Andkhoi and Maimana were all expelled. A Jewish observer in Kabul wrote that:

> The Government ordered them to leave these towns within two hours and with the greatest cruelty, 2000 human beings were forcibly ejected. Families wandering in the Deserts, having been obliged to leave all their belongings, cash and uncollected debts; compelled to endure the terrors of this very severe Afghan winter, in the midst of rain, snow, and hailstorm. Children, babes in arms, expectant mothers and aged people all enroute to Herat.[63]

The Prime Minister and new Regent, Muhammad Hashim Khan, simply allowed earlier policies to continue. Although it is possible that his brother's assassination further aggravated the situation of Jews in Afghanistan, the fate of the community probably only changed by a matter of degree.

The reason that the Jews may have been ordered back to the places of their birth was an attempt to demonstrate that this community was not indigenous to the area, and that they had only recently acquired citizenship through bribes. Before the expulsion, the president of the Bokharian Jews' Association in London, G. Mirzoeff wrote to Zaiman, the secretary of the Joint Foreign Committee and discussed the ramifications of the planned expulsion. "Now, Sir, these Jews have been living in Andkhoi for tens of years and have established homes and businesses there and the order therefore deprives them of their livelihood, and affects a great number of Jews."[64] Even the Board of Deputies reported that: "From the information we have obtained it would appear that most of the Afghan subjects referred to have been recently naturalized and

[62] Gregorian, 339.

[63] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Letter from Kabul written on 13 Kislev 5694 (1 December 1933) inclosed in: G. Mirzoeff to Zaiman, 20 December 1933.

[64] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, G. Mirzoeff to Zaiman, 11 October 1933.

were formally citizens of the Soviet."[65] However, this was only partially correct. The great majority of Jews should have been guaranteed citizenship, as they were born within the country's borders.

There were some occurrences of Soviet Jews bribing their way into Afghanistan with the help of Shmuel Shabtai Dadash. As described in chapter 3, Dadash was born in Herat in 1910, and was sent to Uzbekistan as a part of an Afghan student delegation in 1924. By 1930 or 1931, he became the inspector general for education in the Pamir Mountains, and organized the capture of Ibrahim Beg, one of the last Basmachi leaders. Through this success, he was nominated for political office in Moscow, became friends with the Afghan ambassador, Muhammad Aziz, and supplied him with alcohol. Between 1932 and 1934, he helped Jews flee the Soviet Union. Ben-Zion Yehoshua explains how this exchange worked.

> Ces Juifs s'adressaient à Shmouel et avec l'argent des pots-de-vin qu'il remettait à l'ambassadeur, de qaurante [sic] à cinquante roubles par personne, il leur procurait des passeports afghans qui leur permettaient d'émigrer vers differents pays ... Parmi ceux qui obtinerent [sic] des passeports se trouvaient des Juifs de Boukharie, de Russie, de Pologne, de Bulgarie et de Roumanie.[66]

Dadash returned to Afghanistan in 1934 to marry, and was arrested after a few months. Unwittingly, he had been used by the Soviet Union to spy on Afghanistan in Moscow.[67] Later, this bribery scandal may have been used as proof that Jews bought off Afghan officials. (See section entitled: Official British Response in London for full details.)

When weighing the evidence surrounding the issues of residency and citizenship, it is important to keep in mind the changes in the domestic patterns of Afghanistani Jews. As previously stated, at the turn of the twentieth century, men lived in remote

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[65] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Brotman to Montefiore, 9 November 1934.

[66] Yehoshua 1981, 109-110. "These Jews asked Samuel, and with the bribe money that he gave to the ambassador, from forty to fifty rubles per person, he obtained Afghan passports which allowed them to emigrate to various countries... Among those who obtained passports were Jews from Bukhara, Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania."

[67] Interview with Ben-Zion Yehoshua, Jerusalem, 15 July 2001.

caravan sites. Some left families in Herat and then traveled to Maimana or Qal'e Nau, to conduct business.[68] Women did not bear children in the caravanserais of the north. However, during Amanullah's reign, as the routes became more secure, and travel became easier, Bukharans began to escape southwards. Entire families then settled in the regional towns. By specifying that Jews had to return to their places of birth, the Afghan government sought to reinforce the idea that the Jews were 'strangers,' and not 'native' to northern Afghanistan. In this way, they could use anti-foreigner sentiment to target Jewish business interests and prevent them from trading in karakul fur.

Riot in Herat during the Summer of 1935

After resident Jews were ejected from the northern rim of Afghanistan, they mainly settled in Herat, home of Afghanistan's largest Jewish population. This city did not provide a respite from persecution. By 1935, all of the Jews (long-resident, recently arrived, and refugee) had to flee once again. This was not because of governmental action, but rather because of the simmering anger of the Shi'i populace. This hostility is similar to that found periodically against the Jewish community in other pre-industrial Muslim societies. It may occur during times of political or economic stress, when Jews are not thought to be showing proper subservience. One hot summer day, two youths began to fight. While the original reason for the argument was lost, the Jewish boy Aba Ben Simon caused a Muslim boy to fall down a flight of stairs, and his teeth were knocked out. Ben Simon was imprisoned, yet tempers were ignited because of a rumour that the Muslim boy had been resisting the attempts of forcible conversion to Judaism. A riot quickly commenced.

> [A] large crowd gathered who threatened Jewish shops and houses with plunder. During that day and the following three days, all Jews were beaten by the mobs. Even in the villages, the Jews were so terrified that they closed their shops, and fled to Kabul to their houses to seek refuge from the menacing crowds.[69]

[68] Brauer 1942, 122.

[69] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/2, Boukharian community (Kabul) to Boukharian community (London), 15 Av 5695 (3 September 1935).

Until this point, Jews were allowed to live in Herat and its vicinity. This time, however, the effects of this riot lasted for decades. While Herati Jews fled through fear, hoping to be less subject to the whim of the mob and regional officials, they were forbidden from returning to their place of birth.

In 1935, the daily situation for the Jewish community became particularly cruel, and letters detailing sexual assaults against women and children were received in Jerusalem and London. A letter in Hebrew was sent to *Do'ar ha-Yom*, a Jerusalem newspaper, and signed by fifty-five members of the community. Its format was very traditional and it was signed by dozens of men.

> We, the undersigned, wish to let you know of our afflictions and exile, which grows worse daily like a raging sea. They design evil thoughts and blood libels upon us every day, and we know not whither we might turn for help.[70]

Letters of this time often spoke of hopelessness and despair. Yet, perhaps what is more unusual in this case, is a discussion of the effects of rape upon the community.

> Jewish women when marketing or walking in the streets, are insulted and grossly abused; their dresses are pulled off them; they are outraged and abused. Recently Haim Gah came here [to Kabul] ... they raped and forcibly converted her [his wife], and married her to an Afghan. And we dare not open our mouths to say more on account of our great fear for ourselves. And her husband died of affliction.[71]

There are older precedents for such events recorded in the Jewish history of Central Asia. For example, Mordekhai Batchaev wrote a work describing the life of Yaquv Samandar who was born in Bukhara at the end of the eighteenth century. His wife was murdered, and madrassa students kidnapped his two eldest children. Samandar's daughter, Sarah was taken into the family of an Imam for several years. At thirteen, she was married off to one of her kidnappers. As a grandmother, Sarah was

[70] IOL L/PS/12/1660 Coll3/93, "Tragedy in Afghanistan," *Jewish Daily Post* 15 July 1935, reprinted from *Do'ar ha-Yom*, 122.

[71] Ibid.

able to find one of her relatives, and recount her life story. It is not known what became of her brother, Mousa who was only eight years old when kidnapped.[72] These situations also continued through the 1950s with scattered incidents of kidnapping, imprisonment, and forced conversion of children. Such incidents caused the community extreme distress.[73]

Cases of sexual assault involving young men are less frequently found in the historical record. Elisha Bekhor Abo Gajar, only aged fourteen, found himself imprisoned and threatened with death for resisting rape. A communal letter sent to London, and signed by forty-one refugees attested that he had been:

> passing a store when several Afghans seized him and attempted to commit an indecent assault. His cries attracted the attention of passers by and eventually the Police. The Afghans gave evidence that the boy cursed their religion and they charged him. The boy was taken before the judge chained hand and foot and was severely beaten en route. He was imprisoned awaiting sentence.[74]

A delegation of concerned Afghanistani Jews approached the Foreign Minister Faiz Muhammad, who informed them that this was a local matter and he could do nothing.[75] Next, they petitioned the King, Zahir Shah and his uncle, the Prime Minister. Muhammad Hashim Khan advised them to obtain a visa for Palestine for the boy, and he would make sure Elisha was escorted to the frontier safely. As a result of the intervention of this consul, another letter reported that "a new trial took place, and the boy was again sentenced to imprisonment and to be chained, and we do not know what will be the fate of this boy."[76]

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[72] Mordekhai Batchaev, *La Vie de Yaquv Samandar ou Les Revers du Destin.* Translated by Catherine Poujol (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992).

[73] In the summer of 1955, Tova Shamualoff, aged thirteen, was abducted. She was imprisoned and beaten until she recited the *Shahadah.* See chapter 7 for further details, and the latter part of BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/3.

[74] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2 forty-one refugees (Kabul) to the Anglo-Jewish Association (London), 25 Tammuz 5695, received in Persian and translated by Kestenbaum, who submitted it to Zaiman on 20 August 1935.

[75] Ibid.

[76] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/2, Boukharian community (Kabul) to Boukharian community (London), 15 Av 5695 (3 September 1935).

This case presents many contradictory themes. Muhammad Hashim Khan had promised to help, and managed to start new court proceedings, yet this time Elisha suffered more, as he was not only imprisoned, but also put in chains. While this child's eventual fate is not known, it is clear that many perished from the conditions in prison at that time. When Dadash recounted the fourteen years he spent incarcerated in Afghanistan, he described the following scene, where forty men were kept "sur un dallage de béton par moins de quinze degrés, sans possibilité de se laver, alors que tous étaient couverts de poux."[77] The entire community could be subjected to various forms of violence, including sexual assault, without recourse to justice. This is indicative of their lack of societal status.

The condition of Afghan Jewry quickly became linked to that of the refugees from Soviet Central Asia. Few contemporaries tried to explain this occurrence. One exception was Daniel Goll, who stated that the presence of Bukharan Jewish refugees increased the Afghan government's general hostility towards the Jewish community, since it feared becoming entangled in an argument with the Soviet Union over them.[78] In January 1934, the Board of Deputies and Joint Foreign Committee noted that the reason for the Jewish expulsion from the north was unknown, but involved Bukharan Jews crossing the frontier.[79] They simply did not have enough information at hand to understand the nuances of ethnic politics in northern Afghanistan. Perhaps one explanation for treating both groups equally was that as the Afghanistani Jews began to help the Bukharans, more attention was focused upon the often-reclusive native community. Afghan officials may have concluded that both groups formed a solitary unit, separated only by a political border, just like the Sunni Muslim minorities of northern Afghanistan (with the exception of the recently converted Nuristanis).

The actions taken by the government up to this point do not explicitly include the revocation of Afghan citizenship. Yet the underlying intention was clear as can be seen

[77] Yehoshua 1981, 111. "Forty men were kept on a concrete floor at minus fifteen degrees, without the possibility of washing, although they were covered in lice."

[78] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, "Conversation with Mr. Daniel Goll in Jerusalem," 28 November 1934. (His name is alternatively spelled as Gol, Gul or even Goul.)

[79] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, "Memorandum on Jews in Afghanistan," 3 January 1934.

in the expulsions of Afghanistani and refugee Jews from Andkhoi, Mazar-i-Sharif, Maimana, and the concentration of the refugee Jewish population in an old Kabul warehouse. These actions coupled with the refusal to allow a return to Herat, wrongful imprisonment, and being denied access to markets, employment, and communication with the outside world foreshadowed their final expulsion from Afghanistan, which occurred a short time later. In fact, Jews from Afghanistan did seek refuge in Mashhad and Karachi in 1934.[80]

Implications of the Expulsion of the Afghanistani Jews from the North

On 3 January 1934, Neville J. Laski went to the Afghan Legation in London to inquire about the Jewish expulsion from Afghan Turkestan. The Afghan Minister, 'Ali Muhammad, was not aware of the reason for the expulsion, but thought that it had a political or economic rationale.[81] An examination of the archival evidence shows that this is true. The Afghan government wanted to push the Jews out of their traditional economic niche and replace their businesses with those controlled by Pashtuns. During this meeting with Laski, 'Ali Muhammad also mentioned the establishment of a bank, the above-mentioned *Shirkat Ashami*, which financed the lambskin (or karakul) trade, partially through private capitalists and partially by the state.[82] The Board of Deputies in England then made inquiries as to whether this financing method would benefit the government or private individuals more. Its agents reported that: "the Government is doing its best to encourage Afghans themselves to participate more largely, as the business has up to now been mostly in the hands of dealers in Peshawar."[83]

The expulsion of the Jews from the north appears to be one of the first indications of economic anti-Semitism conducted by the Afghan Government. Its implications were enormous. Being banned from the commercial centres of the north meant that the

[80] IOL L/PS/12/1660 Coll3/93, Legislative Divison of the Government of India (Simla) to Secretary of State for India (London), 29 August 1934, 185. "[S]ome 400 Afghan Jews, mostly from the northern province of Afghanistan, have, -- for reasons which are at present somewhat obscure, -- sought refuge in India."

[81] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, "Memorandum on the Jews in Afghanistan," 3 January 1934.

[82] Ibid, and BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Zaiman to Lord Swaythling, 15 January 1934.

[83] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Lord Swaythling to Zaiman, 16 January 1934.

Jewish community was effectively barred from trade and deprived of the means to survive. In 1944, the India Office explained in retrospect it was clear that: "The expulsion of the Jews from Andkhoi and Mazar-i-Sharif gave the karakul monopoly to the Afghans. Later they were refused licenses for wholesale trade and forbidden to move about within the country, so that many of them were deprived of their means of livelihood."[84] On 11 October 1933, Mirzoeff stated that: "An uncivilized country like Afghanistan wishes to use the methods of HITLERISM."[85] Although the author quoted was probably not aware of it, it is quite clear that certain segments of the Afghan elite were influenced by early Nazi policies. This will be fully discussed in chapter 6.

At this juncture in 1934, the British government knew that the government of Afghanistan no longer wanted Jewish citizens in its territory. Muhammad Akram Khan, secretary at the Afghan legation in Teheran, told a British official that his government was "anxious to clear Jews from Afghanistan. It matter[ed] little how or where they went to as long as they went and he was unable to assist Afghan Jewish subjects in any way."[86] One year later, the British understood far more of the implications and details of this statement. Writing to the British Minister in Kabul, an India Office bureaucrat in Simla reported:

> It appears ... to be the admitted policy of the Government of Afghanistan to get rid of all of the Jews of whatever class by every means, regular or irregular, and to prevent their return by refusing to renew passports, by impounding their papers and by any other means open.[87]

Despite a long history as productive citizens, the Jews of Afghanistan were rounded up, expelled, deprived of a livelihood, travel documents, and finally of communication with the outside world.

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[84] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, "Note on the Jews of Afghanistan," 29 December 1944, 45.

[85] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Mirzoeff to Zaiman, 11 October 1933.

[86] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Extract from Khorasan Consulate Political Diary for April 1934, 198. With thanks to May Schinasi for highlighting his position.

[87] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, O.K. Caroe, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul), 7 June 1935, 124.

Soon after Jews were expelled from the north, the British representative in Kabul, Maconachie discussed the situation of the Jewish community informally with Faiz Muhammad, the Foreign Minister. He explained that Afghanistan's international position could be affected by a reputation for "Jew baiting." Faiz Muhammad replied that the Afghan government was not persecuting the Jews, and had no animosity towards them. According to this document he confirmed the expulsion from Afghan Turkestan. Faiz Muhammad argued that: "Jews from northern provinces had travelled mostly by lorry and had greatly exaggerated hardships in order to bring pressure of foreign opinion on the Afghan Government." Yet, he also apparently said: "Former Jewish residents of Afghanistan would be allowed to remain in the country but not near the Russian frontier."[88] Why were they considered "former" residents? Had their citizenship rights been revoked? Despite the denials of the Foreign Minister, this appears to be the case.

Six months later, the Joint Foreign Committee approached the Foreign Office to ask why prejudice was increasing against the local Jewish community. Laurence Collier, of the India Office, wrote that the restrictive

> measures hitherto taken appear to be based upon political as well as economic motives, but that the attitude of the Afghan Government towards the local Jews seems to be growing in exasperation owing to its alleged exaggerated (a) propaganda in foreign countries (b) bribery of Afghan officials (c) mendacity and immorality. Moreover the popular feeling of hostility appears to be due partly to jealousy of their business interests. [89]

Collier lists many different 'reasons' for anti-Semitism. "Propaganda in foreign countries" is an allusion to the letters sent by the refugees. While Collier wrote several versions of his missive, in the final draft, he told the secretary of the Joint Foreign Committee that "the reports reaching your Committee from Jerusalem provide an

[88] All four quotations in this paragraph come from IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Maconachie (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office (London), 19 January 1934, 244-45.

[89] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Draft letter, Laurence Collier to Zaiman, 18 July 1934, 201-202.

example" of this kind of "exaggeration."[90] At this time, Jews in Afghanistan were not allowed to send correspondence abroad.[91] To avoid these restrictions, letters were often smuggled out to Peshawar, and sent from India to Jerusalem and London. (See Appendix 1 for the Patterns of Jewish correspondence in the 1930s.) The charge of bribery centres on the procurement of passports, as previously mentioned. "Mendacity and immorality" are much more vague condemnations. Yet, Collier was able to easily incorporate this perspective into his letter due to the prevalence of anti-Semitism in official British circles during the inter-war years.

When using British explanations for Afghan actions, one must be aware that British officials may have projected their own sentiments on to those of the Afghan government. Other documents show that Maconachie felt that refugee Jews often lied and could not be trusted.[92] In this respect, the British Minister shared much with Afghan officials. While the Afghans wanted all Jews to be given visas for British territories, Maconachie would not provide visas precisely because he could not check their "character."

The India Office discussed the issue of whether transit visas for India should be given to resident and refugee Jews who already possessed valid visas for residence in Syria. Eventually, they felt that this alone was permissible. The Treaty Department concluded that, "it is difficult to justify the refusal of a transit visa to the holder of a valid visa for the country of his destination." A month later, Maconachie was instructed to use his best judgement, and grant transit visas through India only at his discretion; visas to Palestine should not be furnished.[93]

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[90] Letter received by Joint Foreign Committee is found in: BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2 Collier to Zaiman, 18 July 1934.

[91] The letter written by Yosef --- (Kabul) 13 December 1934, BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2 attests to this.

[92] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/1, Maconachie (Kabul) to Zaiman (London), 30 November 1933 (received 24 December 1933). He wrote that the refugees: "do not improve their prospects by giving, as they so frequently do, obviously false statements as to their antecedents and intentions."

[93] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Minute paper by D.M. Cleary, 28 January 1935, 155; Cleary to Walton, 28 January 1935, 157; and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London) to Maconachie (Kabul), sent 4 March 1935, 146.

If refugees are treated poorly in one place, these attitudes often follow them to future residences. Hannah Arendt writes: "We were expelled from Germany because we were Jews. But having crossed the French borderline, we were changed into 'boches.'"[94] In writing about the Vietnamese boat people, Chan Kwok Bun explains that animosity can be internationalised.[95] Similar trends emerged in Afghanistan for the Bukharan Jewish refugees. After discussion between the Afghan and British governments, Faiz Muhammad declared that the Afghans no longer wanted the Jews to proceed to Palestine, but only to India.[96]

British Jewry's Reactions to the Afghanistani Community

Two weeks after the Board received Collier's response rationalising Afghan anti-Semitism, eighteen Jewish citizen of Afghanistan in Britain wrote to the Board describing how the Afghan Legation in London withheld their passports.[97] The Board of Deputies did not offer assistance, but rather warned them that, "the dissemination of exaggerated and unconfirmed reports is likely to aggravate any difficulties which may exist in Afghanistan."[98] A few days later, an Afghan diplomat in Paris gave an official explanation to the press. He stated that the Jews of Afghanistan enjoy the "same footing of equality as ... other citizens " and the withdrawal of passports "does not at all correspond to the facts." [99] The Board clearly believed this because of its respect for the assessment offered by the Foreign Office. In general, the Board felt that the British governmental response was appropriate. Much of this deference faded after the Holocaust.

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[94] Hannah Arendt, "We Refugees," in ed. Ron H. Feldman, *Hannah Arendt: The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), 61.

[95] Chan Kwok Bun "The Vietnamese Boat People in Hong Kong," in ed. Robin Cohen, *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 384.

[96] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Maconachie (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office (London), 19 January 1934, 244-45.

[97] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, 18 Afghan Jews in London to Board, 31 July 1934.

[98] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Assistant Secretary of Board of Deputies to Boukharian Jews' Association in London, 7 August 1934.

[99] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, J.T.A. [Jewish Telegraph Association] report from 11 August 1934, quoting an interview by the Parisian *Judaisme Sepharadi* on 9 August 1934.

Not all sections of British Jewry acted so conservatively. When reprinting a letter from *Do'ar ha-Yom,* the editor of the *Jewish Daily Post* said that if the fifty-five members of the Afghanistan Jewish community were telling the truth about their condition, then "the absence of any action on the part of Jewish organisations supposed to be dealing with such matters [is] unpardonable."[100] The editor continued his criticsm in a description of an Anglo-Jewish Association meeting on 14 July 1935. The Jewish communities in Afghanistan and Germany were both discussed. He reported that people "spoke again and again about Germany as if they were afraid to reveal the Jewish tragedy in all its full nakedness, and as if there was sound reason why Jewish trouble in one country should be neglected because of the occurrences in another."[101] This journalist appeared to be profoundly aware of the divisions within Anglo-Jewry -- between the well-established community, Russian and Polish immigrants, and the most recent Mizrahi arrivals. After the Holocaust many of these internal divisions were consciously minimized, but before that time, the class tensions of British society were reflected in miniature amongst the Jewish community.

Irrespective of this dissent, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and its associate organisations were the official voice of Anglo-Jewry. When trying to raise money for the refugees in Afghanistan, the Boukharian Jews' Association in London encountered a series of obstinate replies especially from this organisation. It was unwilling to launch a public appeal on behalf of the Bukharans, because they felt the market for charitable contributions had been saturated due to fund raising efforts for German Jewry. Before giving money in aid of Bukharan Jewish refugees in Afghanistan, wealthy members of the Anglo-Jewish community, stipulated that they must be informed of the "special measures ... taken against Boukharian Jews by the Soviet authorities over and above the ordinary restrictions to which all Soviet citizen[s] have to submit."[102] Taking up this challenge, Emanueli explained that Bukharan Jews were "both merchants and religious believers - two things abhorrent to the sight of the Soviet

[100] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, "Tragedy in Afghanistan" in *Jewish Daily Post*, 15 July 1935, 122.

[101] Ibid.

[102] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Acting Secretary, Joint Foreign Committee (Brotman?) to Kestenbaum, 31 January 1935.

Government. [They] suffer therefore more intensely than any other race in Bokhara."[103]

At the inception of the refugee crisis in Afghanistan, the Board of Deputies remained sceptical of firsthand accounts provided by the Boukharian Jews' Association in London, for well over a year. When they did transmit pieces of information to the Foreign Office for confirmation, the tone of their letters could be derisive. For example, in the autumn of 1933, the chairman of the Joint Foreign Committee asked if the British government could make enquiries in Kabul to ascertain if 2,000 Bukharan Jewish refugees had actually arrived in the capital, as the Board believed that Bukharans in London were exaggerating the crisis.[104] The Board of Deputies could not listen to Mizrahi voices with confidence. Consequently, other organisations not established specifically for the protection of Jewish communities were even less inclined to assist the Jews of Afghanistan.

Official British Response

Officials in London first began to deal with Central Asian Jews deprived of nationality documents two years before the British colonial government in India became embroiled in the issue. This was because of the case of two Afghanistani Jewish men the Foreign Office wanted to deport.[105] Bessala Poteliakhoff, son of the representative of the Boukharian Jews' Association in London, was due to be deported because he had overstayed the period of his visa by two years while his wife was ill.[106] The second was the case of Isaac (or Israel) Davidoff, who was convicted of criminal assault and sentenced to a year in prison.[107] When the British approached

[103] BoD ACC/3121/C12/4, Abraham Emanueli (Binyamina) to Herbert Samuel (London), 28 January 1935.

[104] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Joint Chairman, Joint Foreign Committee to Under Secretary of State at Foreign Office, 18 October 1933.

[105] IOL L/PS/12/1674, 108.

[106] IOL L/PS/12/1674, translation of note from Royal Afghan Legation to British Foreign Office, 4 October 1933, 121.

[107] IOL L/PS/12/1674, copy of note from British Legation to Afghan Foreign Ministry (both in Kabul), 18 May 1934, 113.

representatives of the Afghan government, both in Kabul and in London, the Afghans stated that neither Poteliakhoff nor Davidoff were Afghan nationals, as both had fraudulently obtained passports.[108]

Throughout the spring and summer of 1934, Maconachie, the British Minister in Kabul, discussed these two cases with the Afghan authorities. According to Maconachie's report, Faiz Muhammad said that the possession of an Afghan passport was not proof of nationality "since Jews made a practice of obtaining passports of various Governments by bribery."[109] In reference to the nationality status of Davidoff, Faiz Muhammad replied that he was:

> no doubt a scoundrel, who had obtained an Afghan passport, without being entitled to it, from one of the three scoundrels who had been Afghan Ministers in the past, Ghulam Nabi, Ghulam Siddiq, or Shuja-ed-daula. On my [Maconachie's] suggestion that the question was one of a Minister's official authority than of his private character, Faiz Muhammad said that he would enquire by telegram from 'Ali Muhammad but felt sure that Davidoff was a Bolshevik who ought never to have been granted an Afghan passport at all.[110]

Three months later, Maconachie "pointed out that it seemed to me the Afghan Government could hardly demand that the authority of their representatives should be respected by His Majesty's Government in future, if they repudiated the official acts of these representatives whenever convenient to themselves." Faiz Muhammad countered that they "could not accept as an Afghan subject every person who obtained an Afghan passport. Afghan passport authorities were generally corrupt...."[111]

Finally, the British Government in London answered these charges. While remaining subtle, London invoked some of the retributive spirit also found in

[108] IOL L/PS/12/1674, 106 and 115.
[109] IOL L/PS/12/1674, 110, Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 16 September 1934.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid, 111.

Hammurabi's ancient code.[112] On New Year's Day 1935, D.M. Cleary was hard at work. He consulted the Treaty Department who informed him that there had been several recent cases of the Afghan Government "refusing to admit that Jews in England with Afghan passports are Afghan subjects. They are accordingly thinking of proposing to the H[ome] O[ffice] that visas sh[oul]d be refused to Afghans in future until the Afghan Government will adopt a less intransigent attitude."[113] This measure appears to have been enacted with satisfactory results from the British perspective. On 20 January 1936, Maconachie sent a letter to London certifying that the Afghan government would "take back into Afghanistan, on receipt of detail of the crime, Muhajir and Afghan Jews who, having committed a crime in India, become liable to deportation."[114]

According to a document sent from Simla to Kabul, the British government of India realised that Afghanistan was withdrawing passports from Jews and denying them citizenship rights. They were aware that "the effect of this policy is to render Jews entering India from and through Afghanistan stateless persons."[115] One civil servant in India told Maconachie that the Jews were becoming: "a source of embarrassment to the Government of India, seeing that a Jew without a passport is a national of no country and cannot be deported."[116] At this point, British officials in India began to lobby the Afghan consul at Karachi fiercely, not to defend Jewish civil liberties in Afghanistan, but rather because British officials in India did not want to manage a refugee community that could not be returned or displaced elsewhere.

Just as the Afghans viewed "every Russian as a potential spy" the British were also concerned with espionage, and endeavoured to stop Jews from entering India if

[112] This Babylonian code prescribed identical punishments for any crime, such as an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

[113] IOL L/PS/12/1674, Coll3/101, D.M. Cleary to H.A. Rumbold, 1 January 1935, 104.

[114] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll 3/93, Acting Afghan Foreign Minister to Maconachie (both in Kabul) 20 January 1936, 73.

[115] IOL L/PS/ 12/1660, Coll3/93, O.K. Caroe, Deputy Secretary to the Government of India (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul), 7 June 1935, 124.

[116] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, O.K. Caroe (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul) 31 August 1934, 174.

they were "likely to be Soviet agents."[117] To determine this likelihood, they proposed to divide Jews into three categories: those with Afghan passports, Iranian passports, or "Russian Muhajirs." Each merited a different treatment. Jews in Iran were viewed the most liberally, as the Iranian government showed no indication of revoking the nationality of their Jewish citizens.[118] The Government of India held Afghanistan responsible both for Afghanistani Jews and refugees from the Soviet Union. "Russian Muhajirs" were considered the most dangerous as potential Bolshevik agents. Afghan Jews also posed a certain problem, as the Afghan government had been withdrawing and refusing to renew their passports. Before visas were issued to India, Maconachie was instructed to secure an assurance from the Afghan government that any Jew "will remain an Afghan national, and that his passport will not be withdrawn and will be renewed when it falls due for renewal, so that he will be liable for deportation to Afghanistan under the Foreigners Act in the event of misbehaviour in India."[119] Similar measures were required for Bukharan Jews, confirming that the visa holder was not a Bolshevik agent, and in the event of "misbehaviour" in India, s/he could still be deported to Afghanistan. These measures were required to "exclude all undesirable Jews from India." The India Office stated that these measures would ensure that all Central Asian Jews would be liable for deportation, and it would be "impossible for any Jew ... to become stateless."[120]

Afghan consulates were not withdrawing passports solely from Jews in India, but also throughout Europe and Asia. The Alliance Israëlite Universelle representative, Selim Nassi explained that Jews were being deprived of their citizenship in Mashhad under the pretext that these instructions came from Kabul.[121] In Jerusalem, the India Office reported that the Afghan consular representative was "indiscriminately confiscating the papers or refusing to renew the passports of Afghan Jews."[122] In London, Afghanistani Jews complained to the Board that the Afghan legation had

[117] IOL R/12/61 513/I, 155; L/PS/12/1660, Coll 3/93, O.K. Caroe (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul), 7 June 1935, 124.
[118] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Minute Paper, 20 January 1936, 76.
[119] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll 3/93, O.K. Caroe (Simla) to Maconachie (Kabul), 7 June 1935, 124.
[120] Ibid.
[121] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Nassi (Teheran) to Hias-Ica-Emigdirect (Paris), 27 October 1934.
[122] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Minute Paper by Hood, 4 July 1935, 119.

refused to renew their passports and had "furthermore withheld [them] without giving any reason whatever."[123] Similar incidents occurred in Berlin and Paris as well. An unnamed Afghan diplomat in France offered some explanation for these measures enacted across the globe. He told the press that:

> There seem to be some Jews who irregularly acquired naturalisation, and who reside abroad. They are, generally, Jews from Bokhara and Daghistan, who, for political reasons claim to have adopted Afghan nationality. The measures which you speak are aimed at such irregular cases.[124]

One India Office official was aware that these "explanations are not particularly convincing and ... the present state of affairs is likely to continue."[125] By 1935, the entire Jewish community, both native and refugee, was assembled in Kabul, on the brink of deportation. British threats of retaliation appear to have been the only measure that stopped the complete expulsion of the Jews from Afghanistan.

Despite British diplomatic intervention, the situation for resident and refugee Jews in Afghanistan as well as Afghanistani Jewish nationals abroad did not improve. While the British applied enough pressure to the Afghan government to persuade them to withdraw some of their most extreme policy measures, conditions for the Jews remained difficult. They were not forcibly expelled from Kabul, nor were the Bukharan refugees deported to the Soviet Union. However, their daily lives continued to be afflicted by prejudice and hatred. Many escaped illegally to India throughout the 1940s.

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[123] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Eighteen Afghanistani Jews (London) to BoD, 31 July 1934.

[124] BoD ACC/3121/E3/506/2, Jewish Telegraph Association report which originated from the newspaper *Judaisme Sepharadi*, 11August 1934.

[125] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Coll3/93, Minute Paper by Hood, 4 July 1935, 119.

Conclusion

The situation of the Jews in Afghanistan during the 1930s shines light upon levels of mutually reinforcing prejudice. These occur across a range of discursive planes, from intra-Jewish communication in England, to the sometimes veiled prejudice within the Foreign and India Offices, as well as anti-Semitism present in Afghanistan. Accompanying layers of derision meant that this fragile community was put further at risk by anti-Jewish sentiment in Afghanistan. Modern resentments played upon older prejudices, and the Jewish community was increasingly excluded from Afghanistan's commercial life. The Bank-i Milli's express purpose was to wrest the karakul trade from private, and especially Jewish merchants. This very modern type of prejudice was limited to a handful of individuals, and may have been influenced by events within Europe. Consequently, the Jewish community suffered greatly, and many long-term residents joined Bukharan refugees in fleeing years before the establishment of Israel. The end of the Jewish community started early in Afghanistan. Many of the political policies excluding Jews from northern Afghanistan were based on economic considerations, and strained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The following chapter examines this in detail.

Chapter Five: Afghan Economic Policies in the 1930s

Synopsis

This chapter examines Afghan economic policy in the 1930s, particularly the activities of the Bank-i Milli or Afghan National Bank. This was an umbrella organisation for a monopolisation (or shirkat) system that transformed the economy of Afghanistan before World War II. While a financial endeavour, the bank was formed as an organisation which had a distinctly political role. By adopting Soviet techniques as a sort of camoflage, it sought to limit the influence of the USSR especially in northern Afghanistan. The Bank-i Milli and other joint-stock companies, particularly the Shirkat Ashami, severely restricted traditional forms of trade and commerce, causing great hardship for much of the population, especially those on the periphery, entrepreneurial minorities and Soviet refugees. In 1938, an Indian boycott of Afghan fruit brought down the government fruit monopoly, lessening the power of the monopoly system in general. In the same year, the Bank-i Milli was further undercut when the Prime Minister realised the extent of state profits being taken home by top officials. Muhammad Hashim Khan facilitated the creation of Da Afghanistan Bank to check the power of the Bank-i Milli, but as the same employees were used, this goal was unsuccessful. The human cost of the monopolisation system was very high, and many became impoverished as a result.

The Rise of the Shirkat System

The single most important aspect of economic policy in 1930s Afghanistan was the system of monopolisation that began at the dawn of Muhammad Nadir Shah's reign. As examined in chapter 3, the Shirkat Ashami or Joint-Stock Company was initially an umbrella organisation espousing: "a policy of economic nationalism and a system of monopolies in the principal articles of import and export trade."[1] In 1932,

[1] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Minute Paper written by E.P. Donaldson on 26 July 1934 regarding Maconachie's survey of Afghan commercial policy, 1930-34 379a.

the company expanded to become the Bank-i Milli.[2] It built some factories, and attempted to enforce governmental control over the pace of industrialization.[3] In 1934, an article from *Islah* described its goals as "prevent[ing] the money of the country from going into the pockets of foreigners."[4] By making capital available to Afghan entrepreneurs, most often the Pashtun elite, the trade minorities, Jews and Hindus, as well as Uzbek and Turkmen communities were disenfranchised.[5] They became increasingly isolated from the commercial interactions that had sustained them in Afghanistan.

In 1941, a British businessman active in Afghanistan was asked by his government to describe the pattern of trade current under the Bank-i Milli. He provided a clear picture of the way various ethnic groups would work together before the advent of the shirkat system.

> [T]he whole Afghan trade, except the less important fruit trade in Kandahar, was formerly in the hands of Indians from Peshawar and Oriental Jews (Bokharans and Persians). These people used to buy Persian skins in free competition in Mazar, Andchoi [Andkhoi] and Achtcha [Aqcha], to bring them to Peshawar or London and then sell them to European and American firms. They were intermediaries between the Afghan producer and the American or European consumer. I must say that very great confidence existed between the Turkmens and the Oriental Jews, which made credit deals possible. When the market was up everyone felt the advantage the small sheep-owner, the small dealer in Turkestan, the big Afghan dealer and the Indian or Oriental dealer in Peshawar or London, and did the market decrease everybody felt the blow....[6]

The traditional economy described here was closely linked to that of the Emirate of Bukhara and Russian Turkestan before the Russian Revolution. In 1920, when

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[2] Adamec 1974, 203.

[3] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Letter from Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 21 June 1933, 525 and 529; and Economic Report of 1937, Annex D, The Organisation of Industry and Trade, 357.

[4] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Translation of an article published in *Islah,* no.27, 6 September 1934, under the heading: "Economic progress is a factor contributing to the welfare of a Nation," 378.

[5] IOL R/12/160, Secret note on Abdul Majid and the economic activities of the Afghan Bank, c. October 1941, perhaps by a man named Jenkin, 4-5.

[6] IOL L/PS/12/160, Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the Economic Activities of the Afghan Bank, 7.

Bukhara was incorporated into the Soviet Union, seventy-five per cent of Turkmen flocks were brought into Afghanistan. Consequently, the country benefited from a large increase its share of the lucrative karakul market.[7] Karakul skins became the Afghan government's main source of hard currency earnings. The other principal crop was dried fruit. However, fruit has to be stored under more controlled conditions, and could not be removed from the market if the price was not deemed sufficiently high. Karkul skins were able to be stored in any locale as long as it was dry and relatively free from pests and excessive heat. If the international market price was not high enough, the Bank-i Milli would hold back an entire year's crop from the market, as frequently occurred in the 1940s.

As shown in preceeding sections, often those who were not considered ethnically "valid" citizens of the Afghan nation endured a great deal of prejudice. During the 1930s and 40s, the Bank-i Milli forbid Jews from participating in the karakul trade by barring access to northern Afghanistan, and its Turkmen sheepherders. The Bank, in conjunction with the Shirkat Ashami, which controlled the karakul trade directly, limited the number of skins the Jews could purchase in Kabul and the price they would receive for them. Along with much of the Afghan elite, the system of monopoly companies and the Ministry of National Economy considered the Jews as the least "native" citizens of Afganistan, and the most likely to be Soviet spies. Hindus were seen in a similarly hostile manner, yet as Indian and British opinion could impact Afghanistan strongly, some amount of caution was required. Ostensibly, the shirkat system worked to improve the position of all Afghan traders, while members of the Pashtun elite certainly fared the best.

The monopolisation system gained support through nationalist appeals. They were mainly aimed at the elites but reached a wider audience through publication of speeches in the Kabuli newspaper *Islah*. At a meeting in 1934, 'Abd al-Majid Khan discussed Indian traders who purchased lorries for 1500 rupees in Karachi and sold

[7] PRO FO 371 18,256, Weekly summary no. 42, 15 October 1934, 413.

them in Afghanistan for twice that sum. 'Abd al-Majid felt this was outrageous, and stated:

> [W]e have a right not to allow our trade and capital to fall into the hands of self-interested persons ... Should we depart even a little from our present correct economic policy the capital we at present possess is bound to disappear and Afghan trade will go bankrupt.[8]

Goods were priced higher in Afghanistan than India for a series of reasons, including the cost and difficulty of transit, high duties on imports, as well as the risk of raids, tribal wars, and insecure markets. Indeed, this was common throughout the nineteenth century as well. Only several months earlier, the National Bank had assumed the monopoly of car imports for a period of four years.[9] 'Abd al-Majid Khan may have been speaking against the open trade of automotive vehicles as a justification for previous policies.

In September 1934, 'Abd al-Majid's rhetoric increased in intensity, as opposition to the shirkat system grew amongst the populace. In a newspaper article he wrote that:

> The Company have never desired to stand in the way of the trade and interests of their countrymen. But as our individual trade has incurred terrible losses and is on the verge of destruction and extinction at the hands of foreign trade the Company have reluctantly taken control of certain affairs and are preventing the money of the country from going into the pockets of foreigners.[10]

Thus, protection was an especially important goal, certainly when arguing for increased monopolisation. Patriotic invocations may have been one way to quiet critics.

Until 1936, the Afghan National Bank was engaged in Afghanistan's import and export trade. After that point, however, emphasis was placed on developing domestic

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[8]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Enclosure to Kabul despatch 22 June 1934, translation of an extract from the *Islah* no. 256 of 11 June 1934, and parts of a speech made by 'Abd al-Majid Khan at the annual meeting of the Shirkat-i-Ashami, 393.

[9]PRO FO/371/18243, Diary no.12, for week ending 23 March 1934, 178.

[10]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Translation of an extract from *Islah* no. 27, "Economic progress is a factor contributing to the welfare of a Nation," sent from Kabul on 13 September 1934, 378.

industries, and the Bank-i Milli became "something of a national planning centre, directing the activities of a host of semi-independent satellite companies."[11] 'Abd al-Majid stated that the national bank attracted capital as it was the first financial organisation to pay out dividends (between six to twelve per cent) to investors.[12] A report compiled for the British Foreign Office (by its representative in Kabul and the Export Credit Guarantee Department in London) explained that: "Previously Afghans who had money to spare either held it on deposit abroad, bought property with it, or buried it, but money held in any of these ways yielded a comparatively small income, if any."[13]

As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, 'Abd al-Majid felt that eliminating middlemen "was one of the first essentials" for successfully nationalising the economy.[14] When the Bank-i Milli pursued this goal, the existence of the Jewish community was endangered. Most of their business involved acting as intermediaries between producers and consumers. From September 1933, two thousand Jews were removed from the northern province, since they were considered an impediment to the karakul monopoly.[15] In February 1934, Muhammad Daud Khan expelled Jews from Jalalabad and Laghman.[16] Further anti-Jewish legislation continued. Hindus in northern Afghanistan found themselves in a similar situation. As another 'middleman' minority dealing in karakul skins, they were also targeted and by the summer of 1934, many were closing their businesses and returning to India.[17]

As soon as the monopoly companies began to operate, private trading houses felt great pressure. The British Minister at Kabul, Richard Maconachie explained that there was considerable opposition to the government's commercial policy. Both Indian and

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[11] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Export Credit Guarantee Department: Economic Section. First Report on Afghanistan, (based largely on conversations with Abdul Majid Khan). Annex D: The Organisation of Industry and Trade, 358-9.

[12] Ibid.

[13] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no.26 for week ending 28 June 1934, reporting Abdul Majid Khan's comments at the Ashami Company's annual meeting, 328.

[14] Ibid.

[15] PRO FO/371/17198, Cover letter to telegram from Maconachie sent 3 October 1933, 106.

[16] PRO FO/371/18256, Weekly summary from Peshawar, 28 February 1934, 405.

[17] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no. 31 for week ending 2 August 1934, 378.

industries, and the *Bank-i Milli* became "something of a national planning centre, directing the activities of a host of semi-independent satellite companies."[11] 'Abd al-Majid stated that the national bank attracted capital as it was the first financial organisation to pay out dividends (between six to twelve per cent) to investors.[12] A report compiled for the British Foreign Office (by its representative in Kabul and the Export Credit Guarantee Department in London) explained that: "Previously Afghans who had money to spare either held it on deposit abroad, bought property with it, or buried it, but money held in any of these ways yielded a comparatively small income, if any."[13]

As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, 'Abd al-Majid felt that eliminating middlemen "was one of the first essentials" for successfully nationalising the economy.[14] When the Bank-i Milli pursued this goal, the existence of the Jewish community was endangered. Most of their business involved acting as intermediaries between producers and consumers. From September 1933, two thousand Jews were removed from the northern province, since they were considered an impediment to the karakul monopoly.[15] In February 1934, Muhammad Daud Khan expelled Jews from Jalalabad and Laghman.[16] Further anti-Jewish legislation continued. Hindus in northern Afghanistan found themselves in a similar situation. As another 'middleman' minority dealing in karakul skins, they were also targeted and by the summer of 1934, many were closing their businesses and returning to India.[17]

As soon as the monopoly companies began to operate, private trading houses felt great pressure. The British Minister at Kabul, Richard Maconachie explained that there was considerable opposition to the government's commercial policy. Both Indian and

[11] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Export Credit Guarantee Department: Economic Section. First Report on Afghanistan, (based largely on conversations with Abdul Majid Khan). Annex D: The Organisation of Industry and Trade, 358-9.

[12] Ibid.

[13] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no.26 for week ending 28 June 1934, reporting Abdul Majid Khan's comments at the Ashami Company's annual meeting, 328.

[14] Ibid.

[15] PRO FO/371/17198, Cover letter to telegram from Maconachie sent 3 October 1933, 106.

[16] PRO FO/371/18256, Weekly summary from Peshawar, 28 February 1934, 405.

[17] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no. 31 for week ending 2 August 1934, 378.

Afghan middlemen were reported to be struggling to maintain their threatened livelihood.[18] Three years later, in 1937, 'Abd al-Majid Khan claimed to have obtained a complete monopoly control of the karakul trade.[19] A handful of traders managed to retain their employment, though most faced ruin.

In one interview with British officials in Kabul, the Minister of Commerce explained that the National Bank would "supply the local shop keeper directly only retaining a small profit for itself." He claimed that it would gain a monopoly of wholesale business while reducing retail prices. The British representative present at this meeting countered that "a single middleman might be able to raise prices to the retailer quite ... effectively."[20] Indeed, the Bank-i Milli appears to have generated far greater profits than any of the older import and export companies in Afghanistan. By 1941, one estimate of pre-monopoly profit rates was between fifteen to twenty per cent, though the national bank may have gained as much as a 150 per cent rate of return.[21] Part of this profit was due to the sellers' ignorance of market prices.

In 1941, a British businessman in Kabul provided an economic analysis for the benefit of the British mission. When explaining the karakul market, he wrote that:

> The sheep owner gets practically nothing for his skin as he is not supposed to know the exact market price. That is why buyers are not allowed up north and if you realize that a few hundred thousand people breed sheep there, most of them own small flocks, you will understand that the new policy has brought misery ... The real producers are not allowed the benefit of a rising market. ...[22]

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[18]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Minute Paper written by E.P. Donaldson on 26 July 1934 regarding Maconachie's survey of Afghan Commercial Policy, 1930-34, 279 verso.

[19] In July 1937, Fraser-Tytler told Eden that Ashami had control over the entire crop. L/PS/12/1552, Comments on memorandum of 15 March 1937, prepared by the Export Credits Guarentee Department on "The Economic Position in Afghanistan," 306.

[20] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan, 1932, 549. The identity of this official is uncertain.

[21] IOL R/12/160, "Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the Economic Activities of the Afghan Bank," 8.

[22] Ibid.

By keeping Turkmen shepherds ignorant of prices, they remained artificially low. When buyers were allowed to proceed directly from Europe to northern Afghanistan, prices rose, more accurately reflecting open market conditions. In the early 1930s, when the shirkat system was just beginning to assert its monopoly rights, buyers were still allowed into the capital, and even up north. Thus, in September 1933, when three buyers from European fur trading companies arrived in Kabul, Maconachie reported that "competition is fairly keen and prices are rising rapidly."[23] Yet, when the monopolies grew in strength, the open market was severely limited, and traders were banned from travel into the northern provinces (where the karakul sheep were found) shifting the price down once again. Those who conducted trade in Afghanistan before the monopoly system faced great difficulties maintaining their businesses. Very few people were allowed to sell karakul skins, as the Bank-i Milli bought most of the crop. Although the international market was strong in the 1930s, Turkmen immigrants suffered greatly from these policies.[24]

This British businessman argues that if the karakul trade had been in Pashtun hands, 'Abd al-Majid would not have been able to carry out such restrictive policies, as there would have been "risings and insurrections." When discussing the powerlessness and fear of Turkmen immigrants, he states they are not "real Afghans," and provides a window into the ethnic discourse of this time. He explains that while the government says that they "don't recognize tribes, and that everyone living within the Afghan borders is an Afghan," 'Abd al-Majid would not have been able to pursue such an exploitative policy amongst a politically stronger population.[25] Just like the Jewish community, Turkmen refugees were forced to accept the situation under threat of deportation. In 1941, this British businessman estimated that 300,000 Turkmen were involved in the karakul trade, while 400,000 Uzbeks grew cotton. He explained that the Uzbeks (just as the Turkmen) faced similar measures, forced to accept a low price for

[23] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Letter from R. Maconachie (Kabul) to J.C. Walton (London), 2 September 1933, 436.

[24] IOL R/12/160, "Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the economic activities of the Afghan Bank," 8-9.

[25] Ibid, 9.

cotton even though the market was strong.[26] While thousands of documents about the karakul trade are found in western sources, this author found very little on the plight of Uzbek immigrants. Once again, this underscores the importance of international connections in the history of the karakul trade and its Jewish participation.

Political Aims of the Monopoly System: Limiting Soviet Influence

While the shirkat system caused suffering and furthered the exploitation of peripheral groups, its primary aims were political -- limiting Soviet aspirations for economic dominance in Afghanistan, especially in the country's northern rim.[27] In 1932, the Soviet Union made a concerted effort to regain the karakul market that was lost to London at the advent of World War I. The Soviet government encouraged smugglers to cross from Afghanistan's northern border, thus evading customs.[28] This caused the Afghan government a great deal of concern as it was loath to relinquish any of this valuable source of revenue.

These tactics caused the Afghan government to fear that the USSR might "revert to the expansionist policies of Czarist Russia."[29] The historian Ludwig Adamec states that the Soviet Union was welcome to provide military or economic aid to Afghanistan, yet "any measure that tended to lead to economic dependence or political penetration was strongly resisted" by the Afghan government.[30] It was careful not to openly antagonize its powerful northern neighbour, but did not take any opportunity to be overly friendly either.

Despite, or perhaps because of this political balancing act, Afghanistan employed a curious strategy. It appears to have used Soviet-inspired measures to confront the USSR's foreign economic policies. By creating a large monopoly system, and partially

[26] Ibid.

[27] IOL L/PS/12/1552, R. Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 31 August 1933 regarding interview with Faiz Muhammad on 24 August 1933, 433.

[28] PRO FO/371/17198, Afghanistan 1932 Yearly Report: Foreign Trade and Concessions, 402.

[29] Adamec 1974, 232.

[30] Ibid.

adopting Soviet techniques, Afghanistan was able to control its interactions with its northern neighbour more carefully. Afghanistan limited external meddling into its domestic economy by following a model clearly advocated for the benefit of the Soviet Union. In 1932, the British embassy in Moscow reported that one Russian publication advocated the following:

> The monopoly of foreign trade also makes it possible to conduct foreign trade policy with each individual country according to our economic and political relations with that country. This applies particularly to our trade with the so-called Eastern countries. (Persia, Afghanistan, Western China, Mongolia and Tuva).[31]

In fact, the Afghan government followed the Soviet Union's strategies so closely that when the Soviet trade organisation came to negotiate for the purchase of 130,000 karakul skins, rumours and "wild conjectures" circulated in Kabul that the Ashami Company was under Soviet control.[32]

During an interview with the Foreign Minister, Faiz Muhammad, Richard Maconachie learned that one motive for the monopoly system was "as much political as economic. It had really been the necessity of devising some machinery by which trade could be carried on with Russia without exposing Afghanistan to permeation by Bolshevist propaganda."[33] Because of the stated political nature of the Ashami Company, it received early British support, as the UK, India, and Germany were favoured as trading partners over the Soviet Union. Britain was pleased that Afghanistan was acting in a defensive manner against Soviet economic infiltration, and so the questionable means it employed were overlooked.

National policies were grounded in the context of security. One of the Ashami Company's first interactions with the Soviet economy set a highly protectionist tone. In mid-February 1934, *The Times* reported that the Ashami Trading Company had

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[31] PRO FO/371/17198, Afghanistan 1932 Yearly Report, translation from *Vnyeshnaya Torgovlya* as transmitted with Moscow despatch no. 690 for 3 December 1932, 402.

[32] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no. 19 for the week ending 11 May 1934, 257.

[33] IOL L/PS/12/1552, R. Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 31 August 1933, 433.

agreed to exchange karakuli skins for sugar with the Suafghantork Company in Moscow, a Soviet company designed specifically for trade between the USSR and Afghanistan.[34] This may have been due to coercion from the USSR. The cost of transportation to northern Afghanistan made it impossible for Indian or Javanese sugar to compete with the Soviet product. In the autumn of 1933, the Soviet Union raised the price and warned that they would not export it to Afghanistan unless they received part of the karakul crop.[35] The Afghan government apparently acquiesced to Soviet demands, and started paying for sugar with karakul skins. Three weeks later, the Soviet government was dissatisfied with the skins they received. Now they demanded cash for the sugar, and the agreement was suspended, while "the quality of the skins [was] referred to arbitration."[36] Later, all bartering arrangements were refused, and the Soviet Union stipulated that future purchases were to be paid in gold only.[37] In this respect, the Ashami Company dealt very successfully with the Soviet system. By providing sub-standard goods for a barter arrangement, they were able to bypass Soviet stipulations. As an official state monopoly, it could present a unified course of action, thus waylaying further Soviet economic inroads to northern Afghanistan.

Regional Afghan policies are more difficult to explain in this manner. While Muhammad Daud Khan was the governor of the Eastern Province, he incorporated Soviet-style agricultural production orders directly into his administration. During the summer of 1934, he ordered farmers to produce a quota of wheat (3,000 kharwars), and then prohibited the residents of a rice-growing area (Wazir Kala) from growing their staple crop. These orders were unpopular, and sparked protests.[38] Muhammad Daud Khan's rationale is not explained in British sources, though clearly Soviet modelling appears to have been taking place in agriculture. Muhammad Daud Khan must have seen this option as the best way to obtain high agricultural yields.

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[34] IOL L/PS/12/1552, "General Election for Afghanistan," *The Times*, 17 February 1934, 409.

[35] PRO FO/371/17198, Memorandum from Maconachie (Kabul) to HAF Matcalfe (New Delhi), 10 October 1933, 392.

[36] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Letter from Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 7 March 1934, 397.

[37] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Economic Report 1937, Annex C, 356.

[38] PRO FO/371/18244, Diary no. 31 for 2 August 1934, and Diary no. 32 for 9 August 1934. Muhammad Daud Khan was the same man who overthrew Muhammad Zahir Shah in 1973.

Case study: Jacob Pinhas

The following example provides insight into the difficulties faced by non-Pashtun traders. One buyer employed by a British fur company asked for Maconachie's assistance after being imprisoned in Kabul. Jacob Hai Pinhas appears to have been a Bukharan Jew who obtained Afghanistani citizenship, though he resided in London, and was unfamiliar with Afghani laws and recent business practices.[39] Pinhas may have obtained an Afghanistani passport during Amanullah or Muhammad Nadir's reign through one of several corrupt Afghan officials in the Soviet Union. As ambassador to Moscow (1929-33), Sardar Muhammad Aziz Khan was reported to have accepted bribes in return for Afghan passports.[40] A closer option than travel to Moscow may have been available for Pinhas. One British author reported that a corrupt Afghan consul in Tashkent could be bribed for visas.[41] Other Bukharan Jews were able to pay for Persian passports.[42]

Pinhas travelled directly from London via Bombay, Peshawar, and Kabul to Mazar-i Sharif where the karakul sellers congregated. After his arrival, Pinhas was interrogated, and his documents were confiscated. He was told to stay in Mazar and wait until the trade minister returned to the city. After several days Pinhas sought permission to travel to Andkhoi. In his letter to Maconchie, he reported that the Naib ul-Hukumat (Representative of the Government) refused to let him continue his journey, and said that the price of karakul would consequently increase by ten Afghanis per skin.[43] Indeed, this was precisely the crux of the monopolisation system. It forbid the free interaction between producers and middlemen. Profits were not supposed to go into Turkmen pockets, but rather were to be reserved for the Bank-i Milli. In the course

[39] IOL L/PS/12/1626, Enclosure to Kabul despatch no. 85, 28 July 1933, copy of a letter from J.H. Pinhas to H.M. Minister (Kabul), written 25 July 1933, 53-4. .

[40] Yehoshua 1981, 110, and IOL L/PS/12/1867, culled from a report of *Sevodnia*, a Riga newspaper on 10 January 1933.

[41] Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana* (London: Macmillian, 1937), 294.

[42] PRO FO/371/18,257, Khorasan Political Diary Nov. 1933, 251. "The Persians issue passports to practically anyone who can pay the fees...(including a large number of Russian jews [sic]...)

[43] Perhaps the Naib al-Hukumat was Muhammad Gul. (Byron, 294.)

of this discussion, a local merchant entered the room and asked if Pinhas had come from London to buy karakul skins. Pinhas writes that when this was confirmed, "the Merchant addressed me in a bitter tone and said it is a shame that you have come all this way into Afghanistan to ruin our business."[44] Pinhas kept quiet, reasoning that the merchant did not want others benefiting from the lucrative trade. This merchant may have been a rare individual who was allowed to continue trading under the shirkat system. In 1937, the India Office estimated that 50 per cent of Afghanistan's foreign trade was conducted with the Soviet Union.[45] Also, this man may have been upset because as more traders came into the area, competition would increase and prices would rise, more accurately reflecting the price of a more open market. Clearly, buyers not connected with the monopoly system were unwelcome. The hostility that Pinhas encountered both from individuals and government officials appears to strengthen this view. Making a difficult issue worse was the question of his nationality. While Pinhas did have an Afghan passport, it was not recognised by Muhammad Zahir Shah's government.[46]

Despite being banned from travel and purchasing skins, Pinhas secretly appointed agents who bought over 5,000 karakul skins on his behalf in Mazar-i Sharif and Andkhoi. The Afghan government seized them quickly, causing his London firm even further losses.[47] When the trade minister returned to Mazar a few days later, Pinhas was arrested and transported to Kabul. While in prison he contracted dysentery, and was released on bail for medical care. At that point, he contacted Maconachie. The British Minister was uncertain how to proceed because of Pinhas's ambiguous political status, as well as the apparent unseemly details provided in his letter. Eventually, the British mission appears to have taken no action. They determined that he was an Afghan subject, and trade rivals were responsible for his arrest. In 1936, Pinhas's application for a visa to the UK was turned down on the grounds that he was no longer

[44] IOL L/PS/12/1626, Enclosure to Kabul despatch no. 85, 28 July 1933, copy of a letter from J.H. Pinhas to H.M. Minister (Kabul), written 25 July 1933, 54.

[45] IOL L/PS/12/1552, 347. Economic Report 1937.

[46] See chapter 4 for more information.

[47] IOL L/PS/12/1626, Enclosure to Kabul despatch no. 85, 28 July 1933, copy of a letter from J.H. Pinhas to H.M. Minister (Kabul), written 25 July 1933, 54-5; and Letter from Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London), 20 July 1933, 61.

as closely connected to his firm as he had been three years earlier. This seems to have been the inevitable result after being stranded in Afghanistan, unable to either fulfil contracts in Afghanistan or renew ties in London. Pinhas remained in Afghanistan at least until 1937. He next appears in the India Office documents in 1944 as the president of Peshawar's Jewish Communal Charity Association, though nothing is known of the intermediary years.[48]

Pinhas' account of a buying trip that went wrong also says a great deal about the ordinary details of travel and trade at this time. He explains that his route progressed from London to Bombay, and then north to Kabul where he stayed with the fur company's local agent, Yusuf Camontov [Simantov]. When entering Afghanistan, Pinhas carried a letter of recommendation from the London Chamber of Commerce, as well as one from the deposed amir of Bukhara. The Jewish Agency also guaranteed the good conduct of Pinhas.[49] It appears that he chose the wrong allies for his journey, as the letter from the amir caused a great deal of suspicion amongst Afghan government officials.

The most valuable information in Pinhas's account relates to the early consequences of the monopoly system. Jews who opposed the monopolisation system even indirectly could face harsh punishment. While his treatment may have been more extreme than most merchants experienced, nonetheless, older trade patterns were broken definitively.

Consequences of the Monopoly System: An Economic Downturn

As the previous example demonstrates, very little deviation from official proscriptions was allowed for the karakul trade. It was the principal cash crop, and with no possibility of spoilage, extremely valuable to the government. In April 1938, a

[48] IOL L/PS/12/1626, Extract from Diary No. 28 for week ending 14 July 1933, 62; and letter to Mrs. Ksia Pinchasoff (Jerusalem) from Government of Palestine, 28 January 1937, 37-8; and Minute Paper from Political Department, Hood to Clauson, 2 January 1936, 48. See also IOL L/PS/12/1660 Coll 3/93, 43.

[49] IOL L/PS/12/1626, 61 and 48.

handful of Afghanistani Jews working in Kabul for firms run by Central Asian Jews (holding various passports) in London was investigated by the Afghan Prime Minister's office. Their commercial records were seized. One Jewish man working as a lambskin broker for the Ashami Company itself was arrested on suspicion of corruption, as he may have accepted bribes from karakul producers. This man, simply called Amin, may have been cooperating with Dost Muhammad Khan, the deputy of the commercial and monopolies section of the Bank-i Milli, and the vice president during 'Abd al-Majid's absence in Europe.[50]

Soon after the documents were seized, it was determined that Dost Muhammad had accepted bribes, in addition to 30,000 afghanis borrowed from the bank. He was dismissed from his post, and along with others, presumably the Jewish merchants whose documents were confiscated, he was imprisoned.[51] While Dost Muhammad, a high-ranking Pashtun official had been given a six-year sentence, the next year he was pardoned and appointed head of one of the bank's manufacturing companies.[52]

The example of Dost Muhammad Khan shows that corruption was widespread under the new system. Legally or illegally, a very small number of investors, perhaps as few as twenty-five or thirty individuals, benefited from the changes wrought by the monopoly system.[53] Overwhelmingly, it caused serious upsets both within Afghanistan and among neighbouring nations. Legal avenues of trade became nearly impossible for individuals and private companies. It appears likely that the black market flourished, as it did when Iran embarked upon nationalisation strategies.[54] In fact, it is estimated that

[50] With thanks to May Schinasi for higlighting Dost Muhammad's position. (Personal correspondence, 17 April 2003.)

[51] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Intelligence Summary for the week of 8 April 1938, 156; and Kabul Military Attaché's Intelligence Summary, 22 April 1938, 152.

[52] Vladimir Cervin, "Problems in the Integration of the Afghan Nation," in *The Middle East Journal* 6:4 (Autumn 1952): 412, and Fry, 87.

[53] IOL R/12/160, "Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the economic activities of the Afghan Bank," 5.

[54] "I feared the system would lead to the most hopeless confusion, as it had I believed done in Iran, and to intensive smuggling." IOL L/PS/12/1552, British Minister (Kabul) to Deputy Secretary to Government of India in External Affairs Department (Simla), 16 June 1938, 48.

smuggling accounted for one-third of all trade in Afghanistan.[55] Those who needed to exchange afghanis for Indian rupees encountered great difficulties. In December 1937, the Afghan National Bank stopped exchanging currency when the karakul market sustained heavy losses. The demand for skins dropped in the west (because of the continuing effects of the Great Depression), yet the price which western countries were willing to accept did not drop consequently.[56] To aggravate the situation, German and American buyers refused to fulfil contracts entered into earlier that year. As the Bank-i Milli did not want to accept a lower price, they were left with over half a million skins (or about half of the karakul crop that year) and had no recourse to hard currency.[57]

This affected the position of the Bank-i Milli, which was relying upon the sale of karakul for foreign exchange. As a result, the bank stopped exchanging currency, and issuing drafts for branches outside of Afghanistan (mainly in India). Because of the partially self-induced crisis, Afghanistan acted as a closed economy, although it was not large enough, and did not have enough resources to support such a strategy. This wreaked further economic havoc as the value of the afghani plunged against the Indian rupee. It also caused the government great embarrassment, as even pilgrims on Hajj to Mecca could not obtain the funds necessary for their journey.[58]

A great many factors contributed to this economic quagmire. British officials in Baluchistan suggested that the main cause was corruption, as they learned that prominent Afghan officials borrowed large sums from the bank without intending repayment. 'Abd al-Majid borrowed twenty lakh or 200,000 afghanis. The bank's agents in Herat and Kandahar, Sayyid Karim Khan and Haji 'Abd al-Khaliq were each reported to have borrowed five lakh (50,000), while Dost Muhammad Khan was

[55] Fry, 27.

[56] The open market price was reported to have fallen from 32 to 20 Indian rupees per skin. IOL L/PS/12/1552, 264.

[57] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Telegram from Minister (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office 13 December 1937, 271-2; and Extract from Peshawar Weekly Intelligence Summary, 3 January 1938, 245.

[58] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Despatch from HM Minister (Kabul) to HM Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), 10 December 1937, 264; Telegram from Minister (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office, 13 December 1937, 270; Despatch from H.M. Minister (Kabul) to H.M. Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 10 December 1937, 264. In Peshawar the exchange rate fell to 385:100.

reported to have borrowed three lakh (30,000) of afghanis.[59] This may have caused the bank further instability as governing officials had already depleted a portion of its reserves. Other elements also contributed to the crisis. The influence of the worldwide depression played a part, as well as ill-advised nationalisation strategies. The Bank-i Milli's goals were economic and political protectionism that focused on benefits for members of the Pashtun ethnicity, especially the elite. Other elements within Afghanistan's civil society found themselves disenfranchised.

As late as March 1938, 'Abd al-Majid met with the Kabuli karakul traders, and asked them to hand over their stocks. He promised to keep them until the price for karakul rose, and claimed that after a while the Shirkat Ashami would be able to sell the skins for a strong profit. British officials in Peshawar stated that the traders declined: "saying that they have already suffered enough losses at the hands of the shirkat."[60] Despite their steadfast refusals, for the most part, the Ashami Company (in conjunction with the Bank-i Milli) took over the karakul trade and used the earnings to fund governmental projects.

Successful Opposition to the Shirkat Sysytem: The Fruit Trade

As policies became more severe throughout the 1930s, opposition to the monopoly system grew. Muslim Kabuli traders asked the ulama to examine the monopoly system's legality from an Islamic perspective.[61] Jewish traders also faced great hardship, with less recourse to authority figures or legal challenges. They risked imprisonment when trying to continue dealing in karakul skins. The government of Afghanistan did not tolerate opposition in this area, and dealt harshly with them.

The monopoly system was not as effective when facing the opposition of fruit farmers, brokers, and merchants. In January 1938, as the Afghan currency dropped to

[59]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Baluchistan Intelligence Bureau Summary, 28 January 1938, 221. One lakh is the equivalent of 10,000, while one crore equals 10 million. I am grateful to May Schinasi for higlighting these officials' precise roles. (Personal correspondence 17 April 2003.)

[60]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Peshawar Weekly Intelligence Report, 28 March 1938, 167.

[61] PRO FO/371/18,244, Diary no. 37 for 13 September 1934, 436.

one quarter the value of the Indian rupee, unhappy merchants started to protest governmental policies in the north and the Koh-i Daman region. They complained that the heavy controls over trade, especially for the karakul and fruit crops, were responsible for low prices. Meanwhile in Peshawar, Indian traders were also convening. They raised money and selected representatives to lobby on their behalf in the Indian Assembly. These delegates even met with the foreign secretary and Jawaharlal Nehru asking for their help to stop the Afghan system of monopolies. A few weeks later, more drastic measures were taken, as Peshawari traders decided to boycott the entire shirkat system. By April, the boycott spread into Kandahar and Chaman just as the largest harvest in five years arrived, waiting for distribution.[62]

In 1938, turmoil in both the karakul and fruit markets meant that the afghani fell to a low of 4.6 against one Indian rupee. This was devastating for the economy in Afghanistan. High-level discontent began to become visible. Haji Atta Khan, the brother of Muhammad Musa Khan, the director of the Bank's commercial section, and the head of the Shirkat-i Pashtun, accompanied him on a tour to Peshawar and Rawalpindi. While there, Haji Atta Khan criticised 'Abd al-Majid's policies. It seems reasonable to conjecture that Muhammad Musa Khan shared these views, as he did not censor his brother's opinions. In fact, one month later, Muhammad Musa Khan told British officials that he did not wish to trade with the Soviet Union, and intended "to ask the Premier to remove restrictions on the fruit trade so that dealers can dispose of their fruit as they like." With Hashim Khan's permission the Shirkat-i Pashtun could operate in the open market.[63] Representatives of the Indian branches were told to sell their stocks at the current market prices. Indian traders were overjoyed and the Secretary of the North West Frontier Chamber of Commerce sent messages of gratitude to 'Abd al- Majid and Hashim Khan. According to the British, some Punjabi

[62]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Kabul Military Attaché's Intelligence Summary, 28 January 1938, 220; Extract from Peshawar Weekly Intelligence Summary, 31 January 1938, 219; and Peshawar Extract, 14 February 1938, 207.

[63]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Baluchistan Intelligence Bureau Summary, 15 April 1938, 138; and Baluchistan Extract, 13 May 1938, 113. On May 4th, the Cabinet met and decided to abandon the fruit monopoly. In an effort to thwart this decision, and keep a monopoly system, "Russian interests" then placed a large order for dried fruit, and the Cabinet revised its course. Nonetheless, by the end of June, no more Russian orders came in, and the fruit monopoly was definitively abolished.

newspapers also "advised Indian traders to commence agitation against the other Afghan Shirkats."[64]

The section of the Shirkat-i Pashtun that managed the fruit trade (simply called Shirkat-i Mewa or 'Fruit Company') collapsed due to a range of factors. These include geography (as the main fruit-growing region is in the south, near India), with its consequent heavy Pashtun participation, thus the government was more likely to heed their complaints.[65] This was of particular importance because the Pashtuns are the dominant ethnicity in Afghanistan. As Pashtun revolts could undermine the authority of the central government, they could not be treated in as poor a manner as Soviet immigrants and entrepreneurial minorities. Other crucial factors were less product durability, the high number of Indian nationals involved in the trade, and the lower relative value or likelihood of obtaining European currency through its sale. The government relied less upon the income derived from the fruit trade, and encountered a strong Indian opposition which culminated in a boycott supported by the Indian Nationalist movement. Additionally, the head of the Shirkat-i Pashtun, Muhammad Musa Khan was far more ambivalent than 'Abd al-Majid Khan. He considered the president of the Bank-i Milli a rival, and was more likely to accept compromise with unhappy fruit farmers and merchants.[66] All of these factors combined with the discontent of the cabinet and outright economic losses to force the end of the fruit monopoly in June 1938.

After the fruit monopoly was abolished, the British Minister congratulated 'Abd al-Majid on his wise decision. Yet, in the report sent to Simla, Fraser-Tytler wrote that it was "difficult to take 'Abd al-Majid's 'generous gesture' seriously" as this action was "so obviously dictated by the necessity to obtain exchange at all costs."[67] In order to

[64]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Peshawar Weekly Intelligence Summary, 9 May 1938, 115; and Peshawar Extract, 27 June 1938, 78.

[65] "The fruit trade is in the hands of real Afghans around Kandahar is being less exploited and Abdul Majid takes less interest in it which is significant." IOL R/12/160, "Secret Note on Abdul Majid and the economic activites of the Afghan Bank," 9-10. (c. October 1941)

[66]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Baluchistan Intelligence Bureau, 13 May 1938, 112-3.

[67]IOL L/PS/12/1552, Letter from Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Sir Aubrey Metcalfe (Simla), 17 June 1938, 41-2.

salvage what remained of the Afghan economy, he had to change course. Adamec mentions that the Afghans may have been coaxed into abandoning this monopoly when the British provided military materiel.[68] Despite this aid, a global economy hampered by the depression was uninterested in the luxury of karakul skins, combined with highly controlling and protectionist state policies brought Afghanistan to the brink of a financial disaster.[69]

Da Afghanistan Bank: A Failed Check on the Power of the Bank-i Milli

When the fruit monopoly failed in 1938, it became very clear that the Bank-i Milli was making large profits in other sectors, which were not all funnelled into official coffers, or sanctioned by the government. As mentioned above, many private fortunes were made. The Prime Minister, Muhammad Hashim Khan became concerned, and in order to limit the government's dependence on the Bank-i Milli, a new institution, Da Afghanistan Bank or the Central Bank of Afghanistan was founded. Muhammad Hashim Khan also insisted upon a portion of Bank-i Milli's profits. It began to extend a "loan" to the government, which amounted to over twenty-one million afghanis by 1940. The government's initial investment from 1932 was repaid, and Da Afghanistan Bank received sixteen million afghanis, sufficient capital to commence operations.[70] Vladimir Cervin was a consultant at the Bank-i Milli between 1938 and 1944; and in an article written eight years later for *Middle East Journal*, he hypothesised that there might have been a deal between the government and the finance group headed by 'Abd al-Majid. The Bank-i Milli was allowed to continue modified operations in trade and industry, as long as a significant portion of the proceeds was extended to the government.[71] 'Abd al-Majid Khan then left Kabul ostensibly to seek medical care in Europe.

Da Afghanistan Bank or The Central Bank of Afghanistan acted as a "fiscal agent" for the Finance Ministry, and its tasks were to: "control currency, regulate bank

[68] Adamec 1974, 231.
[69] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Peshawar Weekly Intelligence Summary, 27 June 1938, 78.
[70] Fry, 151.
[71] Cervin, 412-3.

credit in cooperation with Banke Millie, control foreign exchange, and make investments in the national interest."[72] It soon began to issue banknotes and at the height of World War II, it took over foreign exchange. Previously, private notes of receipt or debt were written among merchants. The Central Bank was unusual in that it had no control over other financial institutions, and seldom served the private sector. Rather its primary purpose was as the cashier to the Ministry of Finance. Although Da Afghanistan Bank was meant to act as a check on the Bank-i Milli, the latter institution provided the Central Bank's staff, and by the end of 1940, the interests of the Afghan National Bank, the Central Bank, and government were indistinguishable.[73] In the late 1930s, the economy took a downward turn, as the karakul market crumbled, Afghan fruit was boycotted, oil concessions were cancelled, and military expenditures rose due to increasing tribal unrest.[74] Simultaneously, Afghanistan faced great strains on the political front, as the ominous sounds of World War II rumbled closer.

Conclusion

The Bank-i Milli and the monopolisation system shifted the economy from a free market base with one to more state control. Afghanistan was never a fully capitalist or communist system. Yet, in the 1930s, state planning was favoured for a variety of reasons. Most importantly, it was seen as a way to escape domination by the USSR, while still conducting business safely with its northern neighbour. By adopting Soviet techniques, they attempted to shield the country from Stalin's aggression. Preventing the Jews from engaging in the karakul trade was seen as another way to protect against Soviet inroads, as the USSR and the Jewish community were inseparable in the minds of many Afghan officials. The monopoly system signalled the rise of nationalist sentiment while linked to economic rationale. It was felt that Afghanistan's profits should go into Afghan pockets. Although Muhammad Hashim Khan tried to check the power of the Bank-i Milli by establishing Da Afghanistan Bank, he was only partially

[72] Franck, October 1949, 436.
[73] Fry, 86, 90, 111.
[74] IOL L/PS/12/1678, Weekly Summary from Peshawar, 15 August 1938, 48; and Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 82.

successful. The Prime Minister was unable to control its internal practices, and so insisted upon garnishing its earnings instead.

National economies can be very fragile, and this was particularly true for Afghanistan's export and import trade during the 1930s. It simply could not withstand such drastic change in such a short amount of time. The policies implemented by the Ministry of National Economy and 'Abd al-Majid Khan led to the destruction of the Jewish community in Afghanistan, and the continued suffering of many others. These consequences did not extend over the entire population as most people were still nomadic or subsistence farmers. If they had, it is not certain that the government would have survived.

Chapter Six: World War II's Impact on Afghanistan

Synopsis

Chapter 6 begins with an assessment of the foreign policy of Afghanistan in the pre-war period. While Afghanistan courted the UK, Britain's economic assistance was not forthcoming, and so the government looked to Germany as an alternative. Germany's geographic distance permitted more cordial ties than either powerful neighbour would allow. It was considered a non-threatening industrialized power, which could assist internal development without the fear of invasion. After October 1935, political relations warmed, and German economic assistance was supplemented by technical advice and sales of military materiel. While ties of common Aryan ancestry could be invoked, German overtures could be ambivalent. This may have been due to the overlapping divisions of power within the Nazi state.

The extent of Nazi influence may be the most contentious aspect of the historiography of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. While all sources will never be available, this topic is examined in as much detail as the western archival record will allow. This author concludes that direct influence of Nazi party members was mostly contained in the economic sector, as the UK and particularly the USSR were intolerant of other activites. The charge of Afghan anti-Semitism heightened through Nazi ideology is more difficult to address. Again, it was mostly contained within the economic sector, particularly the Ministry of National Economy. Afghan officials applied a syncretic approach to anti-Semitism. Some parts may have been inspired by Nazi ideas, while other, older forms were also present. Clearly, the worst excesses of the Third Reich never appeared in Afghanistan.

The main negotiator between Afghanistan and the Third Reich was the Minister of National Economy, 'Abd al-Majid Khan. A biographic sketch of this man provides a way of understanding the interplay of German influence and anti-Semitism. The Ministry of National Economy was key in disseminating anti-Jewish policy, but his

prejudice was mitigated by the desire for personal wealth. In fact, much of 'Abd al-Majid's anti-Semitism is linked to anti-Communist sentiments, like other officials in many nations, including Germany and the UK. Fear that Jews were communist agents appears to be one of the strongest reasons behind the discrimination they faced over that of other Soviet refugees and entrepreneurial minority groups in Afghanistan.

In the later war years, as the outcome of the conflict became more apparent, official attitudes towards Jews, both inside and out of Afghanistan, changed. The particular strain of Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism faded, while the communities in Kabul and Herat still faced riots, summary arrest, and deprivation. In France and Turkey, Afghan officials began to see Jews more positively, making efforts to protect them from the Holocaust and hoping to use the skills of Jewish professionals to further Afghanistan's development.

The changes that World War II wrought were particularly severe in the economic sector. During the war, strong demand from India and bountiful harvests provided a buffer from ineffective economic policy. However, after the war, demand fell and the region faced a drought. Many suffered hunger, and famine loomed on the horizon. At this point, a monopoly system was no longer feasible and it crumbled.

Pre-War Anxiety

Before September 1939, Afghanistan was concerned by the prospect of both Britain and the Soviet Union fighting against Germany. Her position as a buffer between these two large powers was threatened, and this provoked great anxiety. By July 1939, Afghanistan was genuinely afraid of being invaded by the Soviet Union. Afghanistan accepted economic or military assistance from the Soviet Union as long as it did not turn into intervention. Afghanistan also asked for military guarantees from Britain, though it did not receive a sufficient response. This led Afghanistan to seek support from Germany, whose anti-Communist vitriol may have appeared comforting to Afghan leaders, who did not want to be caught between their two powerful

neighbours.[1] Ironically, just when Afghanistan turned back to Britain, the UK realised the depth of support for Germany.

While London urged caution towards Germany, in India the British administration was more concerned with the Soviet Union. This is significant because the perspective of the Government of India generally predominated in British policy towards Afghanistan. The historian Milan Hauner, author of *India in Axis Strategy* explains that the British Minister Fraser-Tytler expressly underplayed the significance of German economic influence in his reports to New Delhi and London, as he was worried about internal crises besetting Afghanistan, and he felt that the Afghan monarchy might fall.[2]

In November 1937, 'Abd al-Majid visited London as Minister of National Economy, and asked for economic assistance. He said that Afghanistan could not develop without help from abroad. He stated that he was turning first to Great Britain, and warned that if his call for assistance was unsuccessful, he would turn to Germany. 'Abd al-Majid underlined his seriousness with several metaphors.

> A man suffering from a disease which may prove mortal will obviously ... attempt to use any remedies which may come to his hand, and if his friends are unable to help then he will try other people. [Afghanistan's] position was now urgent. People who were well-off did not understand the position of those who were starving and were inclined to delay when action was urgent. He urged strongly that His Majesty's Government should take a practical interest in the economic development of Afghanistan.[3]

Great Britain made a small offer of assistance. This was insufficient for the Prime Minister, Muhammad Hashim Khan and the Minister of National Economy. Countering this proposal, 'Abd al-Majid Khan explained that Afghanistan had been offered significant loans and help for her export trade from the USSR and Germany, but he was wary of accepting this help, as it was "clearly made with a political object."

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[1] These two paragraphs rely upon Ludwig Adamec 1974, 231-4 and 243.
[2] Hauner 1981, 74-78.
[3] IOL L/PS/12/1727, R.S. Hudson's minutes of a conversation with 'Abd al-Majid Khan on 15 November 1937, 42.

Officials in London conceded that Britain's offers were smaller, but argued that they were more attractive considering no political strings were attached.[4]

In June 1938, Fraser-Tytler realised that Great Britain had not acted aggressively enough to court Afghanistan.[5] As a result, Germany gained an increasingly important role in Afghanistan. While the British were caught off guard by this rapprochement, French and Soviet representatives in Kabul were not. Documents now held at the Quai d'Orsay hint at some level of French-Soviet consultation and suspicion of German activities in Afghanistan. Both representatives were more attuned to individual Germans' "militant hostility" than British sources indicated.[6] Perhaps they had better intelligence: it is known that the Soviet Union watched events in Iran very closely, and evidence suggests that similar efforts were made in Afghanistan. For example, Ilya Svetlov, working under the name Bernhard Schultze-Holthus, was engaged in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union in Germany and Iran, while another agent, Bhagat Ram, alias Rahmat Khan, worked in India and Afghanistan.[7] In fact, three years before Fraser-Tytler's dispatches take note of the burgeoning German-Afghan friendship, the French and Soviet representatives René Dollot and Leonide Stark noticed a change in relations. They observed three German military officers arriving in Kabul in March 1935, and both were concerned that this signalled a shift from Weimar bureaucrats to Nazi officials.[8]

The French Minister to Kabul, René Dollot, was also more carefully attentive to Muhammad Hashim Khan's decisions and their consequences than diplomats from other nations. Ironically, this may have been due to the shortcomings of the French

[4] IOL L/PS/12/1727, Viscount Halifax, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the India Office (London) to Fraser-Tytler (Kabul), 9 February 1937, 86.

[5] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 16 November 1938, 94.

[6] Adamec 1974, 226-7, 233.

[7] See Miron Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 359; and Hauner, 335 and 554. Both Ram and Svetlov were multiple agents who appear to have owed their primary allegiances to the USSR. We know that Bhagat Ram never accepted bribes from the Soviet Union, though Ilya Svetlov probably defected to the British for he was allowed to settle in West Germany after the war and publish his highly suspect 'memoirs.' See: (Bernhard) Schulze-Holthus, *Daybreak in Iran: A Story of the German Intelligence Service* (London: Staples Press, 1954).

[8] Q d'O Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, vol.44, Dollot (Kabul) to Foreign Minister (Paris) 28 March 1935, 23-5.

legation.[9] There was very little work for Dollot's staff, as most of France's nationals were involved in archaeological or educational positions. Also, the French diplomatic service was less encumbered in administrative details than that of other nations, particularly the British. Consequently, French sources are more analytical, and aware of the larger currents influencing Afghanistan's policy choices. Dollot was cognizant of German military advisors in Afghanistan, but stated that the Prime Minister would not allow international intrigues to envelop his government. The French Minister felt that Muhammad Hashim Khan would accept German trade credits as long as they were useful, and did not compromise his country's liberty. However, neither Germany nor Japan would come to Afghanistan's rescue, and she had to continue to live within the political confines of her geography.[10]

By the time that Fraser-Tytler clearly expressed his concerns over German involvement in Afghanistan, he wrote that the German government would try to persuade the Afghans to maintain their neutrality, yet "embroil us with the frontier tribes, and so tie up as much of the Army in India as possible." The British Minister speculated that the Germans would offer Afghanistan their eighteenth-century irredentist aspirations for the North West Frontier and the port of Karachi.[11] He felt that "probably the only person in Afghanistan whose loyalty we could have counted on in the face of such temptation would have been the Prime Minister."[12] Indeed, this appears to have been correct, as it was Muhammad Hashim Khan who was primarily responsible for maintaining Afghanistan's neutrality.

On 1 September 1939, Poland was invaded by Germany. Citing treaty obligations, Britain and France declared war against Germany two days later. As in World War I, Afghanistan immediately confirmed her neutrality. The government restricted the activities of German, Soviet and British nationals. Officially, no

[9] Q d'O, Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, vol.44, Note from Foreign Minister (Paris), 6 February 1936, 80.

[10] Q d'O Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, vol.44, Dollot (Kabul) to Foreign Minister (Paris), 28 March 1935, 23-5.

[11] As Britain withdrew from India, this issue became known as the conflict over Pashtunistan.

[12] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Letter from Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax, 16 November 1938, 94.

propaganda (or even opinion from other countries) was permitted, and news of the war was to come only from the government-regulated newspaper, *Islah*. After Poland was invaded, Muhammad Hashim Khan logically concluded that Britain would declare war on the Soviet Union, as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact posed a threat to India.[13] This did not occur, as the Soviets had their hands full in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, Muhammad Hashim Khan wanted assurances that Britain would help defend Afghanistan against a Soviet invasion. He felt that Britain had an obligation to ensure Afghanistan's safety. According to Fraser-Tytler, Muhammad Hashim Khan was adamant that Britain must show its friendship for Afghanistan. Fraser-Tytler agreed with this assessment, and cautioned his superiors that ignoring Afghanistan's request could mean that while remaining officially neutral, they might: "lend an ear in time of trouble to subversive influences in and outside of the country, the result of which might seriously embarrass us on the frontier." If Britain were to give a strong measure of support to Afghanistan, then an alliance would become even more valuable.[14] Fraser-Tytler knew that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact changed the political balance in Central Asia. He felt that either the Afghans would want more British support, or they would be afraid of incurring the anger of Germany or the Soviet Union.[15] Indeed, both projections were correct.

In December 1939, Afghanistan backed out of an agreement with Britain, being deeply disappointed with the lack of military assistance. Afghanistan was not willing to upset the Soviet Union if Britain did not provide full support.[16] Until the summer of 1940, large numbers of Soviet troops were stationed along the border with Afghanistan.[17] Consequently, Muhammad Hashim Khan refused to allow the British to put their agents in Afghanistan for fear they could precipitate an invasion. As a salve,

[13] Hauner, 132-3.

[14] IOL R/12/113, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 7 July 1939, 3-10.

[15] IOL R/12/113, Telegram Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), 26 August 1939, 20-1.

[16] IOL R/12/113, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (New Delhi), 17 November 1939, 65-70; and Hauner, 89-90, 136, 142-8.

[17] Adamec 1974, 245.

Hashim promised to share whatever pertinent information he received about the USSR with Fraser-Tytler.[18]

In the spring of 1940, the British Ambassador to Moscow asked Molotov if the Soviet Union was considering invading Afghanistan. Molotov thought this was an absurd notion. By the summer, British prestige had fallen considerably as Afghanistan watched the war in Europe with intense interest. The Afghan government was astounded by how quickly Western Europe, and especially France, fell under the Third Reich. Now the Afghans became far less concerned with a Soviet invasion, and they contemplated the dissolution of the British Empire. However, they were afraid to become caught between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and anxious that the USSR would be free to conquer territory in the Middle East in return for maintaining neutrality in the European conflict.[19]

Afghan foreign policy was governed by four distinct sentiments in 1940, which made for a contradictory series of relationships. The country's leaders feared the USSR, but wanted to maintain neutrality and a cordial relationship with Britain, while still conducting commercial relations with Germany.[20] Afghanistan turned back to court Germany through the office of the Minister of National Economy and tried to solicit the best deal for itself by cultivating a friendly relationship. Despite this, however, Muhammad Hashim Khan ultimately decided to side with the Allies. He realised that if the British Empire were destroyed, Afghanistan's rulers and boundaries would also change.[21]

On 5 August 1940, Muhammad Zahir Shah publically spoke about Afghanistan's wartime position at the opening of Parliament. He said that his country's policy was to maintain neutrality, and to conduct "political and economic peace-loving relations with all friendly governments." Muhammad Zahir Shah said that Afghanistan has always

[18] Hauner 1981, 136 and 141.
[19] Ibid, 151-5, and 216.
[20] Ibid, 218-19.
[21] Ibid, 518-523.

had an independent foreign policy, and only wished to "safeguard her interests and national rights." He ended by praying that Afghanistan and all Islamic countries would remain out of the war and that "the star of peace and tranquillity [would] shine again and guide humanity in a better path."[22] At this time, Afghanistan could not endanger her independence by openly supporting either the Allied or Axis powers, and simply chose to confirm her neutrality.

Exactly one year after France was conquered, Nazi Germany invaded the USSR. The Soviets now aligned themselves with Britain, and Afghanistan was surrounded by Allied powers. Now Afghanistan no longer had to worry about a Soviet invasion, but any diplomatic overtures towards Germany aroused Anglo-Soviet suspicions. Immediately after the Soviet Union was invaded, Britain wanted all Axis nationals expelled from Iran and Afghanistan. The USSR called for an economic blockade of Afghanistan instead. The Soviet Union closed the border in July.[23] During the summer of 1941, the UK and USSR worked on a plan to neutralize the potential threat posed by elements in Iran and Afghanistan who supported the Axis. Britain considered Iran a greater threat. In Delhi, the Government of India worried about the Soviet position. It realised that geographically Iran could be divided far more easily than Afghanistan. Additionally, the British colonial government feared a hostile reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan in India.[24] The Soviet Union accurately concluded that the elite Iranian army officers were strongly pro-German, wanted to overthrow the Shah, and join the Axis powers. Consequently, between 25 and 29 August 1941, Iran was invaded by the USSR and Britain. Reza Shah abdicated in favour of his young and maliable son, Muhammad Reza Shah and the country was split into two zones of occupation.[25] Afghanistan was left to its own conclusions, if it did not adhere to the demands of the Allied powers, it would also face invasion.

[22] IOL L/PS/12/1678, Despatch from Minister (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), no. 65, 13 August 1940, includes speech by Zahir Shah on 5 August 1940, at the opening of the fourth session of the Afghan State Assembly, 21.

[23] Adamec, 245-7, and 253.

[24] Hauner, 309, 315-6.

[25] Gavin Hambly, "The Pahlavi Autocracy: Riza Shah, 1921-1941," in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville, eds. *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 242; and Rezun, 390.

Muhammad Hashim Khan had to tread carefully between warring powers and loyalties. At the height of German power, in the summer of 1941, he told the German ambassador Hans Pilger that Afghanistan would be destroyed if the border with India was closed, as this would cut off all supplies including gasoline, and the US would freeze the Afghan government's assets. However, if Germany were able to reach the northern frontier, Afghanistan would be happy to welcome her. Pilger described the meeting to his superiors in further detail saying, "the Government was ready when the moment for intervention had arrived ... to let all of Afghanistan take up arms on our side. In that case he [Muhammad Hashim Khan] would mobilize 500,000 men including the border Afghans."[26] This telegram demonstrates the delicate balancing act that Muhammad Hashim Khan performed throughout World War II. If Germany won, Afghanistan would join in her victory, but until that time, the Prime Minister needed to maintain good relations with Great Britain as well as with the Soviet Union. This policy promised Germany a great deal but delivered little, though it vitally kept Afghanistan away from the battlefield.

While Muhammad Hashim Khan made strenuous diplomatic efforts, Afghanistan started war preparations. Along with the king, he explained the dangerous situation to the leaders of the Southern and Eastern Pashtun tribes, asked them to put aside their differences, and encouraged everyone to unite to defend the country. As commander of the Kabul Army Corps, Muhammad Daud Khan spoke in similar terms to the solders. The Faqir of Ipi, a Pashtun tribal leader, who had been sparking uprisings along the southern border was placated.[27] In order to limit civil unrest, the government attempted to control food prices in urban areas.

Despite these initiatives, Britain had the upper hand. Afghanistan was encircled by Allied powers, and India controlled the trade routes, and all imported supplies.

[26] *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945.* (Hereafter: DGFP) Series D (1937-1945) Vol. XIII "The War Years" 23 June – 11 December 1941, no. 169. Telegram from Minister in Kabul to the Foreign Minister, 31 July 1941, 270.

[27] The Faqir of Ipi (Haji Mirza Ali) was willing to lead his Waziri forces against the British or Afghans. He was popular along the border and viewed as a "defender of Islam and a hero in fighting British aggression." After the war, he was one of the strongest advocates of the Pashtunistan cause. (Adamec 1974, 228, 230)

Afghanistan had to comply with British demands. On 30 and 31 October 1941, 180 Germans, and eight Italians were expelled from Afghanistan via India. They were told to be ready to leave immediately, to forestall any British change of heart, such that would mean deportation via the Soviet Union. A Loya Jirga was convened in November. It retroactively approved the government's action, but also reinforced Afghanistan's neutrality. The assembly stated that war would commence if the Allies tried to challenge Afghanistan's neutral position.[28]

In the winter of 1941, the German attack on the Soviet Union slowed, while in Asia, Japan's assault quickened. The Allies turned their attention away from Afghanistan, and within the country, a "strong sense of relief" was palpable, as the possibility of a British invasion "so much alive in the autumn, had now become more remote."[29] By December 1941, officials knew that Muhammad Hashim Khan would remain loyal to the British. Fraser-Tytler reported that the Prime Minister had asked "to be left to himself to steer his ship as he thought best through the shoals of international politics."[30] However, the India Office still worried about particular groups in the government that might cause the monarchy to fall. By the end of 1942, the German threat through the Caucasus had dissipated, and Afghanistan remained quiet, as it did not want to antagonize the Allies.[31] In July 1943, Leo Amery, acting Secretary of State for India explained that "our victories in the autumn of 1942, and since have convinced them [the Afghans] that we shall finally win." He expressed surprise, saying: "they are rather inclined to descend on our side of the fence in so far as they can do without laying themselves open to an allegation of subservience to us."[32] The country maintained neutrality mainly through Muhammad Hashim Khan's leadership.

[28] Hauner 1981, 319-327.

[29] Ibid, 339.

[30] IOL L/PS/12/701A, Kerr Fraser-Tytler: Personal File, note written immediately after leaving Afghanistan, 20 August 1941; n.p.[2].

[31] Hauner, 522-4, see also IOL L/PS/12/1560, Military Attaché (Kabul) to Chief of the General Staff, General Headquarters (New Delhi), 26 March 1943, General Reactions amongst Afghan officers to the war situation, 12.

[32] IOL L/PS/12/701A, Personal letter of L.S. Amery, India Office, Whitehall (London) to Fraser-Tytler, in retirement (Roxburgh), 8 July 1943.

Having charted the political course of the Afghan government in wartime and seen the strenuous efforts that its leadership made to ensure neutrality and border security, it is necessary to further probe the legacies of wartime, and particularly the role played by Germany in the internal policies of Afghanistan. The influence of Nazism continues to be a focal point in the debate within Judaic studies. Furthermore, Nazism is still invoked by some observers as a factor in the ongoing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.[33] From World War I, Afghanistan looked to Germany as a safe economic power to emulate, as it was distant enough to preclude invasion. German technicians were willing to work for far lower wages than other Europeans with equivalent skills. By the middle of the 1930s, relations warmed sufficiently to include political and military ties. An ideological element also helped, as Afghans were considered Aryan.

Afghanistan's relationship to Germany was constrained by the power of Britain and the Soviet Union, particularly after the invasion of Iran in August 1941. While it is difficult to find a direct link between Jewish oppression and Nazi influence in Afghanistan, it is clear that some amount of modelling occurred, particularly regarding prejudicial economic policy. 'Abd al-Majid Khan, the impetus behind the monopolisation system, spent the war years in Germany and Switzerland, and engaged in high-level discussions with Nazi officials, ostensibly, on behalf of his government, but also for his own personal gain. As Germany never conquered the USSR, these goals were unrealised, along with Afghanistan's irredentist ambitions for a seaport. When evidence of Nazi atrocities against the Jews of Europe became somewhat known, it is this author's supposition that Afghanistan sought distance. While still ambivalent, Afghan officials began to see Jews in a new way. An Afghan diplomat in France volunteered to assist Central Asian Jews under Vichy, while the Jewish Agency in Turkey proposed sending Jewish refugees to Afghanistan as technical specialists.

[33] While riddled with inaccuracies, Tariq Ali's article "The king of Greater Afghanistan" (*Guardian*, 30 November 2001, 22) gives a sense of the passion still surrounding this issue.

German Influence

From the middle of the First World War until the darkest days of the Second, Afghanistan took advantage of Germany's interest in her key geographic position to make economic and political gains. Germany viewed Afghanistan as a crucial potential gateway to India, while Afghanistan looked for a third power to balance the competing rivalries of Russia (and later the Soviet Union) against those of Great Britain. The first Afghan-German contact was made in 1915 and 16, when the Neidermayer-Hentig expedition tried to create a military threat to British India from Afghanistan. Its goal was to keep Indian and Australian troops away from the western front, by tying them up along the Afghan border. Another aim was the possibility of forging an alliance between the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Afghanistan. While the expedition was unsuccessful, it did establish contact between the governments of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Habibullah Khan.[34]

After World War I, Afghanistan chose Germany as the most suitable non-Islamic model for economic and military development, because its strength was not based upon colonies. Germany enjoyed an unequalled popularity among the elites, as it provided options that neither Great Britain nor the Soviet Union espoused.[35] Despite being the main provider of foreign expertise to Afghanistan in the 1920s and 1930s, it was never able to exert the level of control over Afghanistan that both large neighbours achieved. Afghanistan permitted Germany to provide services that it could never accept from closer, and thus potentially more dangerous, world powers.[36] Francis Nicosia argues that Germany's goals of economic penetration into Afghanistan remained consistent from imperial days through to 1940.[37] However, the desire for economic profit alone does not fully account for the Third Reich's aims since there was very little financial reward. Instead, the goal of German diplomacy was to arrive on the threshold of India.

[34] Francis Nicosia, "'Drang nach Osten' Continued? Germany and Afghanistan during the Weimar Republic" *Journal of Contemporary History* 32:2 (1997): 238-9.
[35] Adamec 1974, 217-218.
[36] Ibid, 200.
[37] Nicosia 1997, 257.

While not the primary goal, Germany's unique position as a tertiary power enabled it directly to influence key sectors of the Afghan state in the 1930s.

As explained previously, under Muhammad Nadir Shah's rule (1929-1933), all British and Soviet nationals were forbidden from working in Afghanistan, because their potential for political influence was feared.[38] Consequently, German expertise was in high demand, as German nationals were willing to work in difficult conditions for a fraction of the wage that other Europeans demanded. In 1932, the British Foreign Office reported that twenty-five German nationals were living in Afghanistan apart from the embassy staff. Ten individuals were teaching in the German School, ten worked for the Afghan government, and five were employed by private businesses. This is significant because only seventy Europeans had lived in Afghanistan during Muhammad Nadir's rule. As early as April 1933, the German ambassador claimed that there was not a single British or Soviet merchant or specialist in Afghanistan, and that German expertise was prevalent in education, construction, agriculture, and especially technical fields.[39] While this statement was premature, it certainly pointed the way to future numbers, for nine years later, the German community in Afghanistan increased to between 250 and 300.[40]

After Muhammad Zahir Shah assumed the throne on 8 November 1933, and his uncles, especially Muhammad Hashim Khan, helped to govern the nation, German technicians and specialists arrived in increasing numbers.[41] In 1937, they helped to found the Kabul Mechanical School. This institution trained industrial workers, and its equipment was a gift from Berlin.[42] The next year, the director of the Skoda company in Kabul told the British that the German government gave the Afghans a trade credit of 16 million Reichmarks, with a four per cent interest rate repayable over eight years.

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[38] Gregorian, 337.

[39] Adamec 1974, 219, PRO FO/371/17,198, no.283, 402, and Gregorian, 337.

[40] United States National Archives (hereafter: USNA), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-44, Box 5814, 890H.00/197, Bert Fish (Cairo) to Secretary of State (Washington), "Notes on the Situation in Afghanistan," 5 February 1941.

[41] For example, the engineers in charge of irrigation and roads in the Eastern Province were both German in 1934. PRO FO/371/18,244, Diary no. 24 for week ending 15 June 1934, 309.

[42] Gregorian, 254.

Half of the credit was to be used for munitions, and the other half for heavy machinery and building equipment.[43] These numbers may not be quite accurate as they were derived third or fourth hand; nonetheless, they clearly show the general spirit of economic cooperation between the two nations.

German specialists encountered many obstacles in Afghanistan, as explored in the previous chapter. These problems were similar to those the Soviet Union faced when conducting commercial negotiations with the Afghan government. British officials who interviewed one dissatisfied German engineer learned that:

> though Germany was obtaining a large proportion of the trade with Afghanistan very small profits were being made as most of the German firms had been compelled to cut their prices to a minimum in order to obtain the orders.[44]

The engineer felt that the Afghan government would continue with this strategy until no longer viable and then start over again with another nation.[45]

Individuals may have become bitter, but making an economic profit was not Germany's primary goal in Afghanistan. As Ludwig Adamec explains in his outline of Afghan history, Germany had a "distinctly political role" there, and it sought to gain influence in the country that effectively held the keys to India.[46] Afghanistan received development assistance, and felt Germany's strength could balance that of the Soviet Union and Great Britain; while Germany looked to Afghanistan as a base from which an attack could be mounted against Soviet Central Asia or British India.[47] In the words of Milan Hauner, between the end of the First World War and the eve of the Second,

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[43] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Intelligence Summary for 1 April 1938, 164.

[44] IOL L/PS/12/1552, Extract from Kabul Military Attaché's Intelligence Summary, no. 49 for 3 December 1937, 267.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Adamec 1974, 234.

[47] DGFP, Series D, vol.VIII *Memorandum of the Aussenpolitisches Amt* 18 December 1939, 550. (Hereafter DGFP)

Germany went from being an "innocuous cultural presence" in Afghanistan to the "most important contractor for military hardware."[48]

Between 1933 and 1935, the relationship between Afghanistan and Germany cooled. This was less due to scepticism about the Third Reich, and more a matter of personal honour among Afghanistan's rulers. In 1933, the Ambassador to Germany, Muhammad Aziz Khan, was a victim of a political assassination in Berlin, probably by a supporter of Amanullah.[49] As he was the brother of Nadir Shah and Muhammad Hashim Khan, avenging his murder was considered more important than affairs of state. It was only after the assassin, Sayyid Kemal was executed in Berlin that relations between the two countries improved. After revenge, the needs of the military were addressed. In October 1935, negotiations over military assistance commenced.[50]

Economic policy was a different matter, and German expertise was embraced readily. Even in 1933, an article describing the formation of the Ashami Company stated that "[i]ts functions bear the imprint of expert German opinion [and it] closely follows the German model."[51] In 1934, Charles Gaire, the French Chargé d'Affaires at the Kabul Legation, described the establishment of the Ashami Company as a monopoly that masqueraded as a joint-stock company. He said that 'Abd al-Majid was entitled to 300,000 skins, the Minister of Commerce to 150,000, and the Minister of War to 50,000. Gaire explained that the Director of the National Bank wanted to fix karakul prices and shift the market from Peshawar to Kabul, without incorporating mitigating factors like the international depression, competitors, and the whims of women's fashion. The effects of this policy were disastrous, and the price of karakul dropped dramatically. In passing, Gaire wrote that: "les Afghans, à l'instar de HITLER, mettent sur le dos de la juiverie internationale"[52] (At the instigation of Hitler, the Afghans blamed international Jewry). He offers no further explanation of the link

[48] Hauner, 72-3.
[49] Adamec, 196.
[50] Hauner, 75.
[51] IOL L/PS/12/1552, "Central Bank in Afghanistan: Functions of a New Institution," *The Financial News*, 30 August 1933, 438.
[52] Q d'O Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, série 48, Charles Gaire (Kabul) to Foreign Ministry (Paris), 25 September 1934, 104.

between Hitlerian anti-Semitism and the Ashami Company, but it is noticeable that this connection was described only a year after both projects commenced. In this way, Gaire corroborates the accusation of a Central Asian Jewish merchant in London, Mirzoeff who wrote to the Board of Deputies that: "Afghanistan wishes to use the methods of HITLERISM."[53]

In July 1935, Muhammad Zahir Shah invited the cabinet, tribal chiefs, members of parliament, and ambassadors to decide the future course of Afghanistan's foreign policy. There were four streams of political opinion: those who leaned towards Germany, Great Britain, or the Soviet Union, as well as those who preferred isolationism. However, the dominant group was led by Muhammad Zahir Shah, Muhammad Naim and Daud Khan, 'Abd al-Majid Khan, with limited support from the Prime Minister, Muhammad Hashim Khan. It asked if "Germany was prepared to assume the sole responsibility for the modernization of Afghanistan."[54] Germany quickly agreed. According to a German diplomat Georg Ripken, the Afghans intended to:

> set up a central planning agency to coordinate and supervise all Afghan development projects. The agency was to balance the national economy by controlling the volume of exports and imports, in addition to examining all projects to determine priority and feasibility.[55]

This agency's goals sound identical to those of the Bank-i Milli. Not unsurprisingly, at this time the bank started to become more involved in the establishment of the internal economy of Afghanistan with sugar and textile factories.[56]

By October 1935, the talks between Germany and Afghanistan turned from economic to military matters as Afghan officials watched the Italian invasion of Ethiopia with growing concern. The government of Afghanistan decided that it needed enough military materiel for a wartime division, and asked Germany for the equipment

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[53] BoD ACC 3121/E3/506/1, Mirzoeff to Zaiman, 11 October 1933.
[54] Adamec 1974, 219-220.
[55] Ibid.
[56] In the preface to his work, Maxwell Fry states that the Ashami Company was the forerunner to the National Bank.

to build an ammunition factory, a loan of eighteen million marks, and an additional ten military advisors to join the two already based in Kabul. In return, Afghanistan agreed to purchase a set amount of military equipment each year, and a joint Afghan-German group would be given the concessions to exploit natural resources such as gold, nickel, copper, asbestos, and petrol.[57]

Despite these apprehensions, the Afghan leadership moved closer to Germany. In one communication with Berlin, the German ambassador Kurt Ziemke stressed that: "the German-Afghan economic and military programs had to be considered as one inseparable whole of a distinctly political character."[58] In the spring of 1936, soon after the outlines of Afghan-German cooperation were accepted, Foreign Minister Faiz Muhammad and 'Abd al-Majid Khan left for Berlin to finalize the agreement. The Defense Minister, Shah Mahmud Khan, and Prime Minister Muhammad Hashim Khan also travelled to Germany for operations. While medically necessary for both men, these journeys had a clear political dimension. On 2 March 1936, Faiz Muhammad met Adolf Hitler who said that he hoped to strengthen the economic and military relations between Afghanistan and Germany. Hitler assured the foreign minister that Germany would be able to deliver the industrial and military goods that Afghanistan needed.[59]

Afghans were able to find a place for themselves within the framework of Nazi racism, which they would invoke as a way of identifying and connecting with Germany. For his part, Faiz Muhammad was reported to have said he hoped Afghanistan would receive help from Germany, a nation considered to be "'an elder and more advanced Aryan brother.'"[60] US officials stated that after 1937, Afghans started eschewing a previously claimed link with ancient Israel, and instead claimed that they were "pure Aryans."[61] Faiz Muhammad also met with Alfred Rosenberg, and

[57] Adamec 1974, 221-2.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid, 222-3.
[60] Ibid, 223, *citing* Militaerangelegenheiten, Note by Dr. Schmidt, 2 March 1936.
[61] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Kabul General Records 1947, box 11, no. 840.1, 16 April 1947.

spoke mainly about purchasing thirty batteries of mountain artillery.[62] Alfred Rosenberg founded the Aussenpolitisches Amt (APA), or the Foreign Policy Office of the Nazi Party, in April 1933. Its goals were to fight 'world Jewry' and Bolshevism, and create nationalist movements to tear apart the Soviet Union.[63] As such, the APA valued the geopolitical potential of Afghanistan more than the other offices of the Nazi state.

The French Ambassador to Berlin reported that when Faiz Muhammad Khan was interviewed by *Deutsche Zeitung* he said that the National Socialist government had helped the German people make enormous progress, and that he had not noticed any of the 'repugnant' facts that the foreign press denounced.[64] By the autumn of 1936, several protocols were signed between Germany and Afghanistan. These provided for an educational exchange, flying instructors, the delivery of arms and weapons to Afghanistan, and a credit of fifteen million marks to be repaid partially in goods within seven years.[65] Perhaps the most important element was an agreement with the Organisation Todt, signed on 18 October 1937. Hauner describes the Organisation Todt as "not merely a huge road construction firm, but also a vast Nazi institution in its own right which probably had no parallel in the world."[66]

In the immediate pre-war period, German bids for Afghan contracts were significantly lower than other nations. For example, an offer of cotton spinning and weaving machinery was thirty to forty per cent lower. This was explained by the lighter construction, and smaller capacity of the machines, but also by government subsidy and political motives as Germany was determined to obtain these contracts as a way to extend its influence in Central Asia.[67]

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[62] Adamec 1974, 223.

[63] Hauner, 53.

[64] Q d'O, Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, vol.48, Andre Francois-Poncet (Berlin) to Pierre-Etienne Flandin, Foreign Minister (Paris), 14 March 1936, 167-9.

[65] Adamec 1974, 224.

[66] Hauner, 55.

[67] IOL R/12/21, Laurence Collier (Foreign Office, London) to F.H. Nixon (Export Credits Guarantee Department, London), 30 July 1937.

The APA's stated goal was to infiltrate the political and economic structure of Afghanistan so it would be easily controlled in the event of an invasion. In December 1939, the head of Rosenberg's staff, Arno Schickedans detailed the position of the APA in Afghanistan. He mentioned the visits of Muhammad Hashim Khan and other high officials to Berlin in 1936 and 1937, as a result of which "a number of basic treaties covering military, cultural, and economic matters" were concluded. Schickedans highlighted "German-Afghan collaboration," stating that his department had drawn up

> a comprehensive plan for all sectors of the Afghan state and arranged for the appointment of German experts to positions in the Afghan government service as an essential condition for the successful implementation of the plan. By means of such experienced German personnel a network of strong points was to be established in the vital positions providing Germany with the possibility of utilizing them in the event that Afghanistan should take military action with German aid.[68]

The position of an inspector-general was created to supervise the work of all German nationals. This man was to become an advisor to the Afghan government on construction and communication projects.[69] Despite these efforts, Schickedans and others in the APA did not account for the Afghans' distrust of too much foreign assistance. The Afghan government was able to subvert German plans for economic domination by limiting control over roads projects and by hiring men of different nationalities. Road building was undertaken by Polish employees, while architecture was left to the Swiss, and Japanese engineers were also hired.[70] These employees were not supervised by the Organisation Todt's chief engineer, but rather directly by the Afghan Minister of Public Works. The Todt Agreement was limited further in November 1938, to cover only the construction projects assigned to the Germans.[71] In 1941, just before all German citizens except the ten working in the legation were expelled from Afghanistan, a man the British described as a "doubtful Czech," known only by his last name, Légat, gave a copy of the Todt Agreement of 1937 to the British.

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[68] DGFP, Series D, vol. VIII, Memorandum of the Aussenpolitisches Amt, 18 December 1939, 550-1.

[69] Adamec 1974, 224.

[70] Hauner, 77.

[71] Adamec 1974, 224.

Légat explained that the Germans had been "double crossed by the Afghans" whereas the Afghan officials explained that their choices were made on the basis of "sheer merit."[72]

Despite invoking the unity of the Aryan race, Germany provided incomplete equipment at excessive cost to the Afghan government, apparently showing to a more condescending attitude. In Schickedans' 1939 memorandum, he explains that the Third Reich helped to train soldiers, modernize the Afghan army, and increase its potential by delivering equipment like: "antiaircraft guns, trench mortars and mountain artillery." When this shipment arrived in July 1940, 'Abd al-Majid Khan complained that the artillery was useless, as ammunition was not included.[73] In fact, a man simply called "Atik" informed the British that Afghanistan had many difficulties receiving weapons from Nazi Germany. Atik accompanied Muhammad Hashim Khan on his trip to Berlin in 1936, and reported that after asking for weapons "Hitler immediately began to make difficulties." They soon learned that Afghanistan was charged "exactly double" the prices that Turkey and Iran paid for arms, and had to wait almost two years for the shipments to begin while the other countries received them promptly. When some weapons arrived, they were "incomplete with the most ridiculous results at the Kabul end. Guns without breech blocks and so on."[74]

Despite these various affronts, German officials continued to make overtures to Afghanistan. In August 1939, another agreement was signed which sought to expand trade between these two nations, as Germany increasingly valued Afghanistan's raw materials, primarily cotton and wool. While this was potentially lucrative for Afghanistan, it still had to consider the inherent political risks. As Germany's hostility to Great Britain and the Soviet Union increased, Afghanistan's warm relationship could

[72] IOL R/12/123, 6 October 1941, 23-4.
[73] Adamec 1974, 244.
[74] IOL L/PS/12/1789, Francis Wylie (Kabul) to O.K. Caroe, Secretary to Government of India, External Affairs Department (New Delhi), 24 June 1943, 77-9.

draw it into conflict with the Allied powers.[75] The Afghan government deemed neutrality to be essential at all costs.[76]

The Nazi Party in Afghanistan

In 1932, Muhammad Hashim Khan became concerned over Hitler's rise, and confided to Herbert Schworbel, the German Minister (1931 to 1933), that he felt this would end world peace. He was also alarmed by a Nazi club founded by German expatriates in Kabul, and felt it might be necessary to outlaw this organisation, as the members could become involved in espionage.[77] By 1939, the Nazi party in Kabul probably only had eighteen active members. A Swiss informant to the British described a meeting that took place on 31 March, at which donations were collected. The president of the Kabul branch was an employee of Siemens, named Thomas (again, no first name is provided), who spoke about "the duty of every German to give his life if and when the Fuhrer demanded it and also that every true German should be grateful for what he had done in Czecho-Slovakia and Memel." At the end of the meeting "much enthusiasm was shown, everyone giving the Nazi salute, save Locher who brushed a fly off his nose and Major Schenk - military instructor who had difficulty with his tie."[78] Later, Nazi party members in Afghanistan conducted mostly unsuccessful, independent espionage.

Gabriel Bonneau reported that the 250 to 300 Germans in Afghanistan were politically divided. Despite these splits, he told the Americans that a strong and successful NSDAP group in Kabul collected intelligence for Berlin. Nazi party members sought to act "as intermediaries between the German Legation and prominent Afghans, to prepare the way for possible uprisings at the propitious moment and to make pro-German propaganda in order to obtain the confidence and good will of the

[75] Adamec 1974, 232, 238-9.

[76] Ibid, 234, citing Deutsches Auswaertige Amt, Ha.-Pol. Wiehl, Afghanistan, vol.1, Aufzeichnung, Ripken, 7 Nov. 1939, W 3 88/39.

[77] Ibid, 219.

[78] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Extract from Intelligence Summary no. 13 for week ending 31 March 1939, 85.

Afghans."[79] In 1936, Kurt Ziemke, the German Minister in Kabul, warned Fraser-Tytler about the activities of one of his countrymen, Captain Schmidt, who taught Afghan army officers and was described as "a fanatical follower of Hitler."[80] Ziemke was stationed in Kabul between 1933 and 1936, and must have been considerably alarmed by Schmidt's behaviour to take the extraordinary step of informing the British (who then failed to act). Clearly, Ziemke was not a member of the Nazi Party, but he was replaced by Hans Pilger (1936 to 1945) who was.

It took another two years after Ziemke's warning and departure for Fraser-Tytler to write openly of his concerns of wider German influence.[81] He told the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the India Office that prior to this, between 1935 and 1938, he had written reports about the rapid rise in German economic activity. While Fraser-Tytler was suspicious that the Germans may have had extra-economic motives, he felt that he never had concrete evidence of political or military infiltration. By June 1938, however, he stated that "German influence has permeated the early stages of industrial development" and that there were approximately 100 Nazi party members throughout Afghanistan. He wrote that they were "in closer touch with the people than any other foreigners, living the life of the country, and no doubt spreading Nazi propaganda and pro-German ideas wherever possible." He then listed the number of Germans living in Kabul, and their occupations. Out of eighty-three, twenty-four were engineers, and there were two police officers and two military instructors. Other professions represented were five professors, four mechanics, three nursing sisters, two master dyers, and a female teacher. Yet, perhaps the most interesting numbers are those linked to the Afghan civil service. One German was employed in the Purchase Department and another in the Finance Department, while there were four in the National Bank.[82]

[79] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-44, Box 5814, 890H.00/197, Bert Fish (Cairo) to Secretary of State (Washington) "Notes on the Situation in Afghanistan," 5 February 1941. US archives provide further evidence of French suspicion. In December 1940, Gabriel Bonneau resigned from his post under Vichy as chargé d'affaires in Kabul, and fled Afghanistan. He next emerged as a part of the Free French forces in Cairo, and renewed his friendship with an American diplomat stationed there who debriefed him informally.

[80] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan, 1936, 174.

[81] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 16 November 1938, 94.

[82] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 28 June 1938, 134-5.

In August 1940, the American consul in Karachi noted a strong German presence in Afghanistan, especially in the Ministry of Commerce and the Afghan National Bank: "The latter institution has taken in many Germans as clerks since the outbreak of the war."[83]

The evidence makes it clear that not all Germans in Afghanistan were Nazi agents, and numbers of party members may have only reached one-fifth of those in Kabul. In 1943, members of the Turkish military mission visited the British Legation and explained that most of the Afghan officers who hoped that Germany would win the war were those with personal connections. Some may have attended the German school in Kabul, visited Germany, or "come into contact with German employees of the Afghan Government or Afghans who are pro-German."[84] The connection to government employees is surprising. As reported by Fraser-Tytler, most Germans worked under 'Abd al-Majid Khan, or in another economic sphere. In 1936, Muhammad Hashim Khan asked for twelve more Germany army advisors, but he had to turn to Turkey instead, because of Soviet concerns.[85]

Nazi Influenced Anti-Semitism

Perhaps the most contentious claim within the study of the Jews of Afghanistan is the allegation of Nazi influence and Nazi-inspired prejudice. Israeli scholarship makes strong statements against the Afghan government under Muhammad Hashim Khan. While this author found that individual Afghans may have used Nazi ideology to justify oppression of the Jewish community, actions taken against Jews through the instigation of Germans are very rare in the archival record available. High Afghan officials were more likely to follow a syncretic approach to Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism. Some

[83] USNA General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-4, box 5814, 890H.00/193, C.E. Macy (Karachi) to Secretary of State (Washington) 7 August 1940, "Afghan Notes."

[84] IOL L/PS/12/1560, Afghanistan: Turkey and Turkish Military Mission. Military Attaché, British Legation (Kabul) to Chief of the General Staff, General Headquarters (New Delhi), 26 March 1943, 12.

[85] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Extract from Kabul dispatch, no. 12, 5 February 1937, 166.

elements, like economic restrictions were embraced, while the worst excesses were rejected resoundingly.

In the historiography of this Jewish community, it is generally argued that there was Nazi influence in Afghanistan during the time of the Third Reich. In his book *Mi-Nidhei Yisrael b'Afghanistan l'Anusei Mashhad b'Iran* (*From the Lost Tribes in Afghanistan to the Mashhad Jewish Converts of Iran*) Ben-Zion Yehoshua devotes several chapters to the Nazi link with Afghanistan.[86] Among these, is one on Jews from Afghanistan in Nazi-occupied Europe, and another on Ashkenazi Jewish refugees in Afghanistan. The most historiographically important chapter is entitled: "Germans, Nazis and Hatred of Israel." It uses many of the same German and Jewish sources consulted for this study. Much of the chapter reprints original documents, and translates them into Hebrew. For example, Yehoshua provides primary source material on German military assistance to Afghanistan in 1939, claiming that this is proof of Nazi influence in Afghanistan.[87] As the present chapter shows, Yehoshua's approach serves to oversimplify the complexities of the relationship between Germany and Afghanistan, and the Nazi influence on Afghan policy. In spite of the high levels of persecution in the 1930s and 1940s, the Jewish community of Afghanistan was not targeted for extermination. Also, confiscated German documents of the period do not contain a single mention of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. Despite these incongruities, in order to understand the situation of the Jews in World War II and the links to economic anti-Semitism, the influence of Nazi Germany in Afghanistan must be examined.

Some of Yehoshua's later claims are also highly problematic. He says that 1,000 youths were educated with a Nazi orientation in a country that was ninety per cent illiterate. Thus, if Afghanistan had succeeded in obtaining an outlet to the sea, its Jewish community would have been the first one to be destroyed.[88] One only needs to examine the condition of the Jewish communities in Iran and Iraq during the early years

[86] Yehoshua 1992, 189-230.
[87] Ibid, 195-6.
[88] Ibid, 238.

of World War II in order to refute Yehoshua's statement.[89] Located on the Persian Gulf, both countries faced far more Nazi influence and agitation. While suffering persecution, these Jewish communities survived the war years relatively intact. Even Iranian officials argued that Iranian Jews should be treated as Aryans in Germany.[90] The same is simply not true for European Jewry.

Other Israeli scholars do not make as extreme judgments as Yehoshua. Itzhak Bezalel's description is more typical of the references commonly found. He writes that in 1933 "Afghanistan signed a secret pact with Germany that allowed Nazi agents to operate within its territory. Under their influence – and that of other factors as well – the Jews were expelled from all provincial towns." Bezalel explains that the Allied invasion of Iran in 1941 "ended Nazi influence in Afghanistan but brought no relief to the Jews there."[91] Another scholar, Reuven Kashani writes in a similar tone about 1933:

> The tide of anti-Semitism began to overflow on to Afghanistan with the penetration of Nazi agents in the years of World War II. With their influence, and as an effect of the systematic incitement administered by these agents, Jews were kept away from border areas, dispossessed from key positions in foreign trade, and forbidden from wholesale trade inside the country.[92]

Events before and during World War II are not well differentiated in this passage, and in a sense it is assumed that the audience will somehow grasp the effects of Nazism in Afghanistan. This passage is typical of Israeli sources, as Nazi influence is mentioned in passing, but is not treated in detail. Yet, the closer this influence and its potential is examined, the harder it is to categorize.

It is difficult to find a direct link between Jewish oppression and Nazi influence in Afghanistan. While this thesis is devoted to carefully examining the multi-faceted

[89] See for example, S. Djalal Madani, *Iranische Politik und Drittes Reich* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986), 32-43; Ahmad Mahrad, *Die Wirtschafts und Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Iran und dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Reich* (Anzali: Gilan, 1979); or Amnon Netzer "*Ha-Antishemiout be-Iran: 1925-1950*," *Pe'amim* 29 (1986): 5-31.

[90] Madani, 37.

[91] Bezalel in Bar'am-Ben Yossef, 21.

[92] Kashani 1975, 34.

discrimination that Jews in Afghanistan faced, including expulsion from the north and draconian economic restrictions, it does not mean that Nazis directed all facets of Afghan prejudice. Nazi influence in Afghanistan had a relatively loose structure. Statements about the zeitgeist are more common. For example, an American official wrote that until: "1937 the Afghans called themselves descendants of Jvy [sic] second son of the Jewish king Saul, but under the influence of Nazi-propaganda started proving, that they are pure Aryans."[93] Nazi activity within Afghanistan pales in comparison to that within Iran, where a periodical entitled *Iran-e Bastan* was published through the offices of Goebbles' Ministry of Propaganda.[94] Many contradictory foci can be included in claims of Nazi influence in Afghanistan. German officers trained the army and police forces in the latest methods available, however, one was an ardent supporter of the Third Reich, while the other, Major Walter Schenk was shunned for being half-Jewish. He was not particularly likely to spread racial hatred among Afghan officers.[95] In fact, Schenk may have passed on intelligence information to the British. There was a small amount of German propaganda in Afghanistan, but it does not appear to have been focused on anti-Semitic rhetoric, rather it was directed against Britain. The Germans were more effective at circulating rumours through the bazaars, and showing propaganda films to the general population. The films were entitled: "The Campaign in Poland" or "Victory in the West" and were shown even outside of Kabul, at one instance in the textile mills of Pul-i Khomri.[96]

One can find circumstantial evidence for almost any theory regarding the degree of German influence within Afghanistan during WWII. There were no massacres of Jews in Afghanistan, state-sponsored riots, or even luridly anti-Semitic publications. In fact, at least one Afghan diplomat in France was also willing to protect Afghan Jews in France, though Georgian émigré leaders stepped in first. In his personal account, Asaf Atchildi, who helped to coordinate this rescue attempt, wrote: "I owe this man [the

[93] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Kabul General Records, 1947, box 11, 840.1, 16 April 1947.

[94] Rezun, 319.

[95] IOL L/PS/12/1689, Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan 1936, 174; and Hauner 1981, 231.

[96] IOL L/PS/12/335; and Hauner 1981, 227 and note 62.

chief counselor of the Afghan embassy], whom I do not wish and am not permitted to name, admiration and gratitude, although he never had the opportunity to testify on our behalf: but his intention was humane and courageous."[97]

Still, the connection between attempts at a totalitarian control of the economy coupled with violent measures to keep Jews away from lucrative trade is too difficult to ignore. Even British sources note a link. In 1944, they wrote that: "A bad period began" in 1934, when 'Abd al-Majid Khan was "anxious to secure" a monopoly in the karakul fur trade. In order to achieve these aims, he played "on racial theories of Nazi extraction."[98] Measures against the Jews commenced soon after 'Abd al-Majid Khan arrived home from Europe in 1933, and continued while he was in Europe between 1936-38. However, wealthier Jews may have found some respite, and were able to continue trading illegally, as the acting manager, Dost Muhammad, and other employees of the National Bank were amenable to bribery.[99] In July 1942, Muhammad Naim Khan spoke to the German and Italian representatives, Pilger and Quaroni, and told them that Afghanistan was now willing to provide intelligence about the Soviet Union and India. However, the Axis ministers did not believe Muhammad Naim Khan and thought that it was a trap. Another example of a pro-Axis official may have been 'Abd al-Rahim Khan, a Secretary of State in the Ministry of PublicWorks, where "German experts had previously held great influence prior to their expulsion."[100] However, no further information is available about this man.

Nazi influence may have been strong in some fields, particularly the economic sector, however large gaps mar the archival record. While this author examined archives in the UK, France, Israel, the US, and even published German sources, most German and Vichy diplomatic files were burned in Kabul between 1941 and 1944.

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[97] Asaf Atchildi, "Rescue of Jews of Bukharan, Iranian and Afghan Origin in Occupied France (1940-1944)" in *Yad Vashem Studies* VI:(1967): 258-9. Islambek Khoudoidar Khan was the chargé d'affaires of the Afghan Legation in Vichy, Shah Wali Khan the ambassador, while Ghulam Ali Khan and Muhammad Ali Khan were also staff members. Qd'O, Guerre 1939-45, Vichy, Asie, Serie E, file 65, 15.

[98] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Note on the Jews of Afghanistan, 29 December 1944, 45.

[99] IOL L/PS/12/1727, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 2 June 1938, 11.

[100] Hauner, 512 and 516.

Russian sources (while partially available) were not consulted for this study, due to the logistical difficulties of archival research in the former Soviet Union as well as the author's insufficient Russian language skills. However, the most glaring omission is the complete lack of access to twentieth-century Afghan documents. At the time of writing, it is not clear what documentation still exists or when Western scholars might gain access.

It is this author's opinion that Nazi influence was mostly *indirect* in Afghanistan. Individual Afghans, especially those in positions of authority were able to use Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism against Jews in their own peculiar manner. Restrictions in the economic sector point to the strongest link to the Third Reich, though the extent of German (let alone Germans who followed Nazi ideology) participation in the Ministry of National Economy has not been fully documented. Occassionally, economic restrictions were mitigated through bribery and joint Muslim-Jewish ventures (where a Muslim man acted on behalf of his Jewish partner). Other forms of discrimination, like riots, mass arrests, and forcible conversion have far older roots in the Muslim world. By far the most prominent example of pro-Nazi sentiment within the archival record available is 'Abd al-Majid Khan and other officials within the Ministry of National Economy and the Bank-i Milli.[101] There may have been others with a similar perspective, especially in the police and army, yet economic examples are the most documented in Western sources.

'Abd al-Majid Khan: Primary Negotiator with the Third Reich

Among Afghan officials, 'Abd al-Majid Khan was at the centre of overtures towards the Third Reich. He was the most forceful impetus behind the monopolisation system, and his economic policies did the most to hurt the Jewish community. "Abd al-Majid was a Pashtun from Herat, and had no possibility of accruing a tribal following. Perhaps as a matter of compensation, he tried to gain power through economic policy,

[101] USNA General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-4, box 5814, 890H.00/193, C.E. Macy (Karachi) to Secretary of State (Washington) 7 August 1940, "Afghan Notes."

and by invoking the idea of who was a "legitimate" Afghan national. 'Abd al-Majid Khan was born around 1902, and started working in the Herati customs office as an adolescent. As discussed in chapter 3, 'Abd al-Majid established a joint-stock company to trade with the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The biography compiled by the British Legation says that he became wealthy "exporting and importing contraband with the connivance of the customs officials."[102] When Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Faiz Muhammad reported that 'Abd al-Majid left the Soviet Union "after loosing a great deal of money, and being very unfairly treated by the Soviet authorities."[103] This appears to have left him bitter, though well educated in early Soviet economic and political practices. In the early 1930s, he divided his time between Berlin and Kabul. When Nadir Shah rose to power, 'Abd al-Majid returned to Afghanistan, and established the Shirkat Ashami in 1930, and the Bank-i Milli in 1932. In 1933, 'Abd al-Majid moved his family back to Kabul to head the National Bank after Muhammad Aziz Khan's assination in 1933.[104] Exposure to the waning days of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Third Reich appear to have influenced his thinking. He seems to have found elements of fascism appealing, especially in relation to the economy.

In 1936, 'Abd al-Majid travelled to Europe to arrange trade credits and contacts. On the eve of 'Abd al-Majid's visit to London, the Foreign Office explained his position to the British Government's Hospitality Fund:

> while not holding any official position in the Afghan Government, [... he] controls all the Government's economic and financial activities, subordinate only to the Prime Minister himself; and the National Bank and State Trading Company, with the Companies connected with them, hold the monopoly over practically the whole internal and external trade of Afghanistan.[105]

[102]IOL L/PS/12/1562, Leading Personalities of Afghanistan, 1948, 3.

[103] PRO FO 371 17,198, Letter from Maconachie (Kabul) to John Simon (London) on 31 August 1933, reporting interview with Faiz Muhammad on 24 August 1933, 371.

[104] Fry, 82-3.

[105] IOL L/PS/12/1727, Laurence Collier to the Secretary of the Government Hospitality Fund, 2 October 1936, 128. The US consul in Karachi also noted that Muhammad Hashim Khan had a close business relationship with 'Abd al-Majid and it was through his influence that he had been included in the cabinet where "his business acumen and organizing ability would be an asset to the Government." USNA General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, Decimal File 1940-4, box 5814, 890H.00/193, C.E. Macy (Karachi) to Secretary of State (Washington), 7 August 1940, "Afghan Notes."

In many ways, this fits the description of an economic *éminence grise*. While visiting Europe, 'Abd al-Majid Khan attended the Nazi party congress in 1937. By March 1938, 'Abd al-Majid returned to Kabul, and he was appointed Minister of Trade six months later. In April 1939, his title changed to Minister for National Economy.[106] This title shift may indicate that 'Abd al-Majid Khan wished to emulate Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank and German Minister for National Economy.[107]

In December 1939, an internal APA memorandum discussed the potential of an operation against India. It noted that "personal contacts with the Afghan Government gained by years of work, as well as the strong German colony which is active in all spheres of military, economic and cultural life" could be used against the British in India. 'Abd al-Majid Khan's influence was viewed as critical. He was thought to be "absolutely the most powerful person in the Afghan Government, and one could rely fully and completely on his efforts to expand steadily political cooperation with Germany."[108] A week later, the head of Rosenberg's staff, Arno Schickedans, expounded on the value of 'Abd al-Majid Khan, saying: "He assumed a very great personal risk in order to put through the pro-German policy in the past few years, but always lived up to his promises." Schickedans continued: "actual developments are proof that his confidential information on the weak and strong points of the Afghan Government was correct." According to his analysis, 'Abd al-Majid Khan did not change direction after the beginning of the war, but sent "urgent telegrams ... requesting more German experts for the government service." The author of this memorandum felt that "German influence in the Afghan Government has doubtlessly greatly increased. The Germans are very popular everywhere in the country."[109]

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[106] IOL L/PS/12/1562, Leading Personalities in Afghanistan 1948, 3.

[107] Weiner Library, PC 4 34 B, Microfilm roll 92, "German Policy," in *Daily Mail* 28 August 1934, and "Gangster Finance," editorial in *Financial News* 28 August 1934; Hjalmar Schacht, *Account Settled,* trans. by Edward Fitzgerald (London: Weidenfeld &Nicolson, 1949).

[108] DGFP, series D (1937 – 1945) vol. VIII The War Years (September 4, 1939 – March 18, 1940), no. 449, 528. Memorandum of the Aussenpolitisches Amt, Berlin 12 December 1939, Operation against India.

[109] Ibid, No. 470, 551-2. Memorandum of the Aussenpolitisches Amt, Berlin 18 December 1939, Afghanistan – The Objectives of the Aussenpolitisches Amt of the NSDAP.

In June 1940, soon after the defeat of France, the German Minister to Kabul, Hans Pilger reported to the Secretary of State at the Foreign Ministry, Ernst Weizsacker, that 'Abd al-Majid Khan was making various secret overtures to him. He claimed that Afghanistan was "ready to mobilize all opportunities arising among sentimental and religious ties, and especially to induce frontier tribes and the Afghan population in India to take action against the English." Pilger speculated that while 'Abd al-Majid Khan asked for confidentiality, some Afghan officials had to be aware of his negotiations. This is evident as 'Abd al-Majid Khan asked for Afghanistan's borders to be respected by the Soviet Union, while from the Germans he demanded military hardware including tanks and planes, and expected a seaport if they were to invade India.[110]

In January 1941, Abdul Majid left Kabul to seek medical treatment. His original intention had been to travel to the United States.[111] Instead, he changed direction and travelled to Germany. Adding levels of irony, British policies directly influenced his choice. The Minister of National Economy's personal physician, a German Jewish refugee, George Perlmann diagnosed him as severely ill, and 'Abd al-Majid Khan wanted to be treated in the United States, as his family was already there.[112] Yet, he wanted his physician to accompany him on the journey as well. 'Abd al-Majid Khan

[110] Ibid, volume X, *The War Years* June 23 – August 31, 1940, no. 30, 29. Telegram from Minister in Afghanistan to the Foreign Ministry, Kabul 27 June 1940. Weizsacker noted that "Afghan revisionist wishes are directed towards the British possessions" and not the Soviet Union. (Vol. XII, 283. The War Years, 1 February to 22 June 1941, no.158, Memorandum by the State Secretary, Berlin, 12 March 1941.)

[111] IOL L/PS/12/1562, Leading Personalities in Afghanistan 1948, 3.

[112] There were other Ashkenazim in Afghanistan during World War II. Walter Kychenthal spent 13 years in Turkey, before being hired by the Ministry of National Economy in 1940. The English were worried that he was a Nazi spy. Kychenthal was friendly with other two German Jews, Dr. Turk who also arrived in 1940, and helped to organize Afghanistan's traffic laws, and Frau Bromberg. (IOL L/PS/12/765, Second Secretary, British Legation (Kabul) to Assistant Director, Intelligence Bureau (New Delhi), 24 October 1942, and L/PS/456.) US sources note five refugees from the Baltic States who were imprisoned until the British granted them visas to Palestine. (USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul – General Records, 16 April 1947, 840.1) Also there were a handful of Czech employees of Skoda, whom the Germans tried to have deported. It is not know what happened to them, though this author feels that they may have remained in Afghanistan as the head of Skoda, L.M. Moghadam enjoyed a close relationship with the British Legation. (IOL L/PS/12/1791, Squire (Kabul) to Weightman (New Delhi), 23 August 1946, 17.)

applied for a transit visa through India on behalf of Perlmann, though the Government of India refused to grant the doctor permission as he was an enemy national. Fraser-Tytler was furious and wrote that Perlmann was "bitterly anti-Nazi" and there was not the "slightest risk of his engaging in any form of subversive activity while in India."[113] As a result of this decision, 'Abd al-Majid Khan decided to return to Europe where he was familiar with the medical system. He may have chosen to receive medical care in Germany for a different reason, as US State Department records state that he was required to have either his wife or son return to Afghanistan as a 'hostage' to the government of Afghanistan, to ensure that the Minister of National Economy would also return from America.[114] While 'Abd al-Majid Khan may have initially envisioned a shorter visit, he only returned to Afghanistan in 1946.

As a result of 'Abd al-Majid Khan's extended convalescence, he had many opportunities to meet with Alfred Rosenberg and his staff while still Minister of National Economy.[115] Almost all of the confiscated German files about Afghanistan centre on negotiations with 'Abd al-Majid Khan in Kabul and Berlin. As previously mentioned, there is not a single reference to Jews in the published documents. Mostly 'Abd al-Majid asked about the possibility of fulfilling Afghanistan's irredentist dreams, as well as German assurances in the case of a Soviet invasion. By March 1941, Freiherr von Weizsacker, the State Secretary of the Foreign Ministry became aware that 'Abd al-Majid was not authorized to negotiate officially on behalf of the Afghan government. 'Abd al-Majid Khan countered that he would get permission *if* the discussions were encouraging.[116] Six months later, there were hints that 'Abd al-Majid Khan was considering leaving the Afghan government.[117] Nazi officials were aware

[113] IOL L/PS/12/45, the entire file deals with 'Abd al-Majid Khan; see particularly: notes from Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 June 1941, and demi-official letter from W. K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to O. K. Caroe (New Delhi), 31 January 1941.

[114] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-44, Box 5814, 890H.00/197, 4. Bert Fish (Cairo) to Secretary of State (Washington), "Notes on the Situation in Afghanistan," 5 February 1941.

[115] Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (hereafter: CDJC), CXLVI-21, *Aktennotiz Besuch des Afghanishen Wirtschaftsministers*, A. Rosenberg, 1 March 1941.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid, vol. XIII *The War Years* (23 June to 11 December 1941), no. 289, 464. Telegram, Minister in Kabul to the Foreign Ministry, 8 September 1941.

that the overtures which 'Abd al-Majid Khan made in Berlin were beyond the instructions of the Afghan government.[118] After a certain point, he was a free agent who sought personal gain. This is what the party officials found most appealing.

'Abd al-Majid Khan did not return to Afghanistan during the war years, though he continued to apply for visas to the United States. All applications were rejected. The British Embassy in Washington D.C. reported to London that the Americans had been told by the former French Chargé d'Affaires in Kabul, Gabriel Bonneau (currently with the Free French forces in Cairo) that 'Abd al-Majid Khan was pro-German.[119] The British reported that the State Department did not seem to mind offending the Afghans, and "their view is that the refusal of a visa might have a salutary effect."[120] The funds of 'Abd al-Majid Khan's wife, Emilie were confiscated in Bermuda as she travelled from New York to join him in Germany before his surgery.[121] In 1943, Muhammad Hashim Khan ordered him home, and then cut off his salary. 'Abd al-Majid Khan spent the remaining years of the war in Germany or Switzerland, complaining of various maladies whether real or invoked.[122] His loyalty to the Afghan government became increasingly tenuous, and he appears to have lost a considerable amount of his influence over economic policy for the next two years. However, by the end of the war, 'Abd al-Majid reconciled with the Afghan government. In February 1946, he returned to his old position.

Only four years later, in 1950, 'Abd al-Majid was fired as Minister of National Economy. This was partially because of using excessive foreign exchange for the

[118] DGFP, series D (1937-1945) vol. XII *The War Years* (1 February to 22 June 1941), no. 158, 283. Memorandum by the State Secretary, Berlin, 12 March 1941.

[119] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 1940-44, Box 5814, 890H.00/197, Bert Fish (Cairo) to Secretary of State (Washington) "Notes on the Situation in Afghanistan," 5 February 1941.

[120] IOL L/PS/12/455, telegram from Washington to the Foreign Office (London), 11 June 1941.

[121] IOL L/PS/12/455, travellers Censorship, Bermuda Airbase, Censorship Report no. 88, report on the Eastbound 'Yankee' Clipper, 20 May 1941. Emilie was a member of the German ethnicity resident in the Soviet Union, and Prof. Adamec believes that she may have been Jewish. Indeed, every possible permutation of Emilie's heritage has been offered as proof of her husband's policies and prejudices. (See Hauner 1981, 87.)

[122] Hauner 1981, 325, note 88.

Helmand project to dam the Arghandab River.[123] The economist Maxwell Franck argues that even after Muhammad Hashim Khan stepped down as Prime Minister, the Bank-i Milli was able to obtain special privileges. However, the

> underlying economic rivalry between the Banke Millie group and the government (which had political overtones because of the absence of tribal and dynastic ties within Abdul Majid's industial-mercantile group) broke out into the open when he left the Cabinet in 1950 over a controversial exchange allocation.[124]

By 1953, a new economic policy characterised by the government taking stricter control of businesses commenced under Muhammad Daud Khan.[125] 'Abd al-Majid spent the next half of his life in America and died in Boston in 1998.[126]

Link between anti-Communism and anti-Semitism in Afghan Policy

'Abd al-Majid Khan moulded many of the policies of the Ashami Company, National Bank, and Ministry of National Economy in response to his great fear of the USSR. He felt that the greatest danger to Afghanistan came from the north, as Great Britain was no longer seeking to expand her empire, while the Soviet Union had absorbed the Czarist Russian desire for more territory. He did not feel that Afghanistan was under immediate threat, but that the USSR would take advantage of "defenseless and resourceless" areas like Outer Mongolia or Chinese Turkistan (Xinjiang).[127] 'Abd al-Majid Khan believed that all Jews in Afghanistan were potential Soviet agents, and used this fear to justify severe policies.

British sources also demonstrate that anti-Semitic policies may have been a by-product of 'Abd al-Majid's fear of the Soviet Union. In 1935, the Minister to

[123] Fry, 200-1.

[124] Peter Franck, "Economic Progress in an Encircled Land," in *Middle East Journal* 10:1 (Winter 1956), 47-8. Spelling remains as in the original.

[125] Ibid, 47-9.

[126] Personal communication with Professor Ludwig and Mrs. Rahella Adamec, Tucson, Arizona, March 1999. Although the British recorded that 'Abd al-Majid Khan was born in 1902, the Adamecs said that he died at age 102. Clearly, there is some discrepancy, though he was a very old man.

[127] IOL L/PS/12/1727, L. Collier, Foreign Office (London) to W. K. Fraser-Tytler (Kabul), 27 November 1937, 32-34.

Afghanistan, Richard Maconachie warned British firms hoping to do business with the Ashami Company, that "in personal dealings Afghans prefer blonds, prejudice against Russians and Jews being fixed."[128] The British also hypothesized that Afghan governmental officials might "admire a fellow autocracy ... and be drawn towards Germany by a common hatred of communism, Jews and the Soviet Union."[129] In January 1935, Maconachie had an interview with the Prime Minister and several other cabinet members, though for the most part, it was 'Abd al-Majid who spoke. 'Abd al-Majid complained about the success of a boycott of Ashami's karakul skins in London, as only 20,000 of 300,000 (or approximately six per cent) had been sold. He felt that London merchants had been "deluded" by Jews, and consequently, the Soviet Union benefited from Ashami's losses.

'Abd al-Majid connected Jewish commercial behaviours with Stalin's economic policies. Like British officials, he firmly believed that most Jewish refugees were Soviet spies. According to Maconachie, he explained that Afghan goods could not be sold: "owing to the Jewish propaganda in London, which was of course being supported by the Soviet Trade Agency whose purposes it so admirably served."[130] 'Abd al-Majid was involved mostly in restricting Jewish economic activity and settlement in the northern tier of the country. Other policies such as being forbidden to communicate with the outside world, attend state schools, or being employed by the government originated in the political sector.[131] He was aware that Jewish dealers in London were boycotting the shirkats because both the fur traders themselves and the entire local Jewish population were forbidden from entering the northern provinces. The Afghan leadership felt that "every single Russian ... was an official agent" rather than a trader.[132] This is ironic, as the previous chapter discusses, most karakul sheep arrived in Afghanistan with refugees from the USSR.[133]

[128] IOL L/PS/12/1689, telegram Maconachie (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, India Office (London) 26 January 1935, 262.

[129] IOL L/PS/12/1689, secret note by B.A.A. Burrows, 18 December 1936, 196.

[130] IOL L/PS/12/1688, Maconachie (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Department of Overseas Trade (London), 30 January 1935, 122-23.

[131] USNA, Record Group 84, Kabul, 16 April 1947, 840.1.

[132] IOL L/PS/12/1688, Maconachie (Kabul) to H.A.F. Metcalfe, Foreign Secretary in the Foreign and Political Department (New Delhi), 8 February 1935, Extract from note on interview with Prime

As described formerly, French, American and Jewish sources all comment on the influence of German employees at the Bank-i Milli, Ashami Company, and the Ministry of National Economy. French archives also contain the first observation from a non-Jewish perspective of the link between Afghan anti-Semitism and Nazism. This connection grew stronger as the war intensified. Three months before the French Republic fell, Gabriel Bonneau, the Chargé d'Affaires in Kabul, analysed German influence in the Afghan National Bank. He wrote that 'Abd al-Majid was a great admirer of Germany who helped to enact measures to control the exchange rate and foreign commerce through monopolisation, which would force "the Afghan economy to change in an autocratic and totalitarian direction." In his analysis,

> The similarity of Afghan and German commercial methods adds to the considerable credits given to Afghanistan by our enemies, and also helped to assist the development of German commerce in the past few years. The National Bank, where one only finds foreign experts who are German, revels in having not only German tendencies and preferences, but also by applying these politics to the whole country. This is the most important factor that caused Germany to conquer Afghanistan's economy.[134]

From this contemporary description and the other available evidence, it would appear that the link between Afghan anti-Semitism and Nazi influence in Afghanistan was predominantly felt within the economic sector, especially in organisations run by 'Abd al-Majid Khan. 'Abd al-Majid Khan is the personification of an opportunistic link between the Afghan economy and Nazi anti-Semitism. Just as in the Third Reich, the expression of his anti-Semitism was coupled with a fear of the Soviet Union. But in other respects, his prejudice was different, and more obviously a direct result of the desire for pecuniary gain. It is important to note that this anti-Semiitsm was based on

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Minister, Foreign Minister, Minister of Commerce, and Abdul Majid Khan, Managing Director of Ashami Company, 22 January 1935.

[133] Q d'O Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, série 48, Charles Gaire (Kabul) to Foreign Ministry (Paris), 25 September 1934, 103. After the fall of the Emirate of Bukhara, both Turkmen shepherds and Bukharan Jewish merchants fled to Afghanistan, bringing specialised knowledge, which enabled karakul fur to become Afghanistan's most valuable export.

[134] Qd'O, Asie 1918-1940, Afghanistan, série 48, 308-9. Bonneau (Kabul) to Foreign Ministry (Paris), 16 February 1940. (Translated by author.)

the economic role of Jews in Afghanistan, for there is *never* any mention of slaughter. 'Abd al-Majid Khan's policies did not extend far beyond the limits of commerce, though these restrictions brought terrible privation, and an internal refugee crisis, both of which caused unnecessary suffering and death.

Replacing German Specialists with Jews: First Contact between Afghanistan and the Yishuv

The Afghan government showed differing tendencies towards Jews. In 1943, a dramatic shift occurred at the impetus of the Jewish Agency. (This also happened in the late 1940s, when Israeli diplomats interceded with Afghan officials at the UN. In both situations, personal, friendly contact at the highest level was vital in bringing about an amelioration of the condition of the Jews.) Two years after Great Britain and the Soviet Union insisted on the expulsion of Axis nationals from Afghanistan, in conjunction with the Jewish Agency, the Ambassador to Turkey asked for German-speaking Jews residing in Turkey to replace these specialists. In January 1943, Faiz Muhammad met Charles (Chaim) Barlas, the representative of the Jewish Agency in Istanbul at a party in Ankara. Barlas and the host of the gathering, Professor Y. Eckstein, worked in concert to convince Faiz Muhammad that Jewish refugees could replace the expelled Axis nationals.[135] Two months later, Faiz Muhammad received permission from Kabul, and wrote to Barlas saying that following orders he received, his government has decided to hire fifty-two specialists of "your co-religionists."[136] This appears to have marked a dramatic shift from previous policies. After a push from the Jewish Agency, the Afghan government may have realised that they could obtain as many individuals as they desired with German technical and linguistic skills, at a lower salary than other Westerners demanded, while still complying with the Allies' demands. Ben-Zion Yehoshua argues that Barlas was a visionary, and if his proposal of Jewish experts for the Afghan Government had been successful, it would have

[135] Yehoshua 1992, 214-5.
[136] CZA, L15/90, Faiz Muhammad (Ankara) to Charles Barlas (Istanbul), 9 March 1943.

created a window of opportunity for some fleeing the Holocaust, as well as creating unprecedented co-operation between the Yishuv and Afghanistan.[137]

Ultimately, the British blocked the proposal from Barlas, as they considered all Jews fleeing Nazi Germany as enemy nationals. However, in March 1943, Faiz Muhammad sent a list of positions to be filled, including science instructors for secondary and tertiary education, physicians, and engineers.[138] Barlas then compiled a list of 50 individuals, all "desirous to leave as soon as possible."[139] Some of the professionals mentioned appear to have been expertly qualified, and could have significantly assisted public works projects, higher education, and health care in Kabul.[140] Despite the support of the British Minister in Ankara, who said that many worked for the Turkish government and "have nearly all at one time or another offered their services to the allied cause," the Foreign Office and the India Office were against their employment.[141] Visas to transit India were refused, on the grounds that: "so called anti-Nazis sometimes turn out to be agents in disguise" and that these Jewish individuals would be open to the pressure of the German Legation in Kabul.[142] The Foreign Office felt that a new German colony would be established, and even if Jewish, it would send the wrong message to the Afghans. H.A.F. Rumbold underlined the tone of the government in London when he wrote:

> From a security point of view I imagine that a Jew of enemy origins who retains associations in enemy territory would be just as dangerous in Afghanistan whether he is at present resident in Turkey or in Palestine and it is far preferable that people whom we are doubtful should remain in Palestine where we can control them rather than in Afghanistan where we cannot.[143]

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[137] Yehoshua 1992, 222.

[138] CZA, L15/90, proposal of the Afghan Government for immigration into Afghanistan, 20 February 1943.

[139] CZA L15/90, Charles Barlas (Istanbul) to Faiz Muhammad (Ankara), 1 April 1943.

[140] CZA L15/90, E.K. Weber to Charles Barlas (both in Istanbul), 31 March 1943.

[141] IOL L/PS/12/1795, telegram from Angora to Government of India (H. Knatchbull-Hugessen), 29 March 1943, 66.

[142] IOL L/PS/12/1795, I.T.M. Pink, India Office minutes, 2 April 1943, 64; and H.A.F. Rumbold, 6 April 1943, 63.

[143] IOL L/PS/12/1795, Rumbold, Foreign Office minute, 20 April 1943, 46; and Rumbold, Foreign Office minute, 26 May 1943, 25.

The most that Rumbold was willing to accept was that three Swiss Jews would travel to Afghanistan without dependents.[144] Only a small handful of German speaking Jewish specialists were able to avoid India, and take the more dangerous land route. They traversed the Soviet Union and entered Afghanistan through the northern border.[145] 1943 marked a change in Afghan policies towards European Jewry, as they began to be seen more favourably and even potentially useful.

The Precarious Situation of Jews in Afghanistan during World War II

In February 1945, the Board of Deputies reported that it had not received any communication from Afghanistan since December 1938.[146] Throughout World War II, the problem of communication with remote Jewish communities was exacerbated. However, British diplomats collected copious intelligence reports at this time, which help to provide at least some information about events during the war. In May 1940, a blood libel occurred in Kabul, which could have led to a pogrom, if not for quick-acting officials. "A wild rumour started ... by two motor drivers stating that Jews were kidnapping small Afghan boys and murdering them led to some excitement in the city." A crowd of approximately two thousand people gathered outside of Jewish homes, and demanded that the kidnappers be arrested. Two Jews were arrested along with the two drivers, who "claimed that they had been told to start the rumour by a police officer." All four men were soon released.[147] This incident brings to light several important points. It is known that the police chief of Kabul protected the Jewish community in 1948, and if the same man was in office eight years previously, it stands to reason that he may have acted similarly.[148] Yet, the claims of the drivers must also be examined. In 1939, Nazi officials boasted that the regular and secret police forces in Afghanistan had been reorganized along German specifications. Schickedans wrote that: "within a

[144] IOL L/PS/12/1795, Rumbold, Foreign Office minute, 18 May 1943, 31.
[145] Yehoshua 1992, 221.
[146] IOL L/PS/12/1660, A.J. Brotman, Secretary of Board of Deputies of British Jews to Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at the Foreign Office (both in London), 19 February 1945, 26.
[147] IOL L/PS/12/1660, extract from Weekly Intelligence Summary no.19, 11 May 1940, 50.
[148] See following chapter for further details.

short time a hard-hitting, well-disciplined police force has been created which enjoys great respect among the population."[149] With the exception of draconian economic restrictions, this may have been another way that fascist influence was felt within the Jewish community. Curiously, police officers appear to have been responsible both for instigating and ending this volatile situation.

Four years later, the Jewish community did not fare as well, since police officers were carrying out the orders of much higher officials. In November 1944, a Muslim was found drunk in the street, and reported that he had acquired the alcohol from Jews. There are several accounts of what happened next. One version comes into British archives from a merchant in Peshawar who notified a British Jewish officer in Bombay, while the other was reported by an American official in Kabul. Depending on the version one follows, either the Kabul police force or 150 soldiers "encircled and entered all the Jewish houses, beat the women and arrested one male member of every Jewish family except three [families]."[150] All kinds of items were confiscated, including wine, copper utensils, bottles of vinegar or tomato sauce, as well as materials "that may eventually be used for the manufacturing of alcohol, as jams, raisins, juices etc." Forty-six men were imprisoned and chained for two and half months, until the women took matters into their own hands. In a letter confiscated by the British, Yakob Kalantar, a survivor of the events, wrote later to Jerusalem that "at last our wives made a great hue and cry" and thirty-seven men were released upon payment of 71,000 afghanis. The remaining men were sentenced to five years imprisonment, but were also released after a fine of 35,000 afghanis was paid in 1945.[151] Afghan officials said that collective fines were imposed because the community was "unwilling to cooperate with

[149] DGFP, Series D, vol. VIII, Memorandum of the Aussenpolitisches Amt, 18 December 1939, 551.

[150] Four years later, an American official claimed that the police were involved in the arrests, while the Secretary of the Jewish Communal Charity Association in Peshawar claimed that the men involved were soldiers two months after the event. See: USNA Record Group 84 Kabul – General Records, 16 April 1947, no. 840.1, and IOL L/PS/12/1660, copy of letter from Hananael Mirzoeff (Peshawar) to Captain M.A. Lew (Bombay), 28 December 1944, 43.

[151] USNA Record Group 84, Kabul – General Records, 16 April 1947, no. 840.1, IOL L/PS/12/1660, Hananael Mirzoeff (Peshawar) to Captain M.A. Lew (Bombay), 28 December 1944, 43; and intercepted letter from Censor Station, Peshawar, Yakob Kalantar (Kabul) to Zerubabel Shemuel (Jerusalem), 9 April 1945, 17.

the authorities in identifying the guilty parties."[152] The British felt that the punishments were decreased because the Jews had petitioned the King and Prime Minister, and raised awareness of their plight in the United States and United States, England, India, and Palestine.[153]

Afghan Jews remained united, and thus suffered collectively. The Jewish merchant in Peshawar, Hananael Mirzoeff felt that "fascist influences have prompted the Afghan Government to take the steps they have in this matter."[154] This is a particularly important source, as Jews within Afghanistan had a difficult time communicating with the outside world during this time. (It is not known where Yakob Kalantar sent his letter, it may have been brought out of Afghanistan through unofficial means and posted in Peshawar.) American sources vary in their account of events. They explain that the mass arrests occurred when Muhammad Naim Khan, nephew of Muhammad Hashim Khan, was acting as Minister of National Economy while 'Abd al-Majid was in Europe.[155] British officials offered a range of reasons other than fascist sympathies. These included the "well-known Puritanism" of Muhammad Hashim Khan, the fact that a relative of the king's almost died or went blind from drinking moonshine, or more simply, that increasing numbers of young men (including

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[152] USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul – Confidential File 1947 vol III, box 12, no. 840.1, Ely Palmer (Kabul) to Secretary of State (Washington), 30 May 1947.

[153] IOL L/PS/12/1660, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 24 February 1945, 28. Jewish representatives in Peshawar, Bombay, and Jerusalem were also notified. CZA S25/5291, Palestine Office (presumably Cynowicz at the Jewish Agency) in Bombay to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, 22 January 1945.

[154] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Hananael Mirzoeff (Peshawar) to Captain M.A. Lew (Bombay), 28 December 1944, 43.

[155] USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul - General Records, 16 April 1947, no. 840.1. For example, see W. K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), appendix V. When 'Abd al-Majid went to Germany, Muhammad Naim Khan was named acting Minster of National Economy, in addition to being Minister of Education and assistant to the Prime Minister. He was expected to succeed Muhammad Hashim Khan, yet his skills as an administrator came into doubt during the war years. When 'Abd al-Majid returned to Kabul in 1946, Muhammad Naim Khan was appointed ambassador at London, and two years later, he represented Afghanistan in Washington. In 1950, he was once again Deputy Minister of National Economy, continuing his involvement in this ministry. The British openly wondered if he had "the brains, physical fitness or strength of character for the task" of becoming Prime Minister. IOL L/PS/12/1562, Leading Personalities of Afghanistan 1948, no. 58, Muhammad Naim Khan, 14. See also USNA Record Group 84, Kabul - General Records, 312 UN Preparatory Mission, 20 March 1950.

adolescents) were drinking, and officials wanted to stop the sale of liquor.[156] While making and selling alcohol was illegal, the government tolerated it among the Jews. When the product began to be used by Muslims, however, it was viewed as an embarrassing scourge, and then perhaps used as an excuse for further restrictions on the Jewish community. Similar occurrences also happened among Christian communities in the Middle East.

During the mass communal arrests in November 1944, Muhammad Naim Khan sent plain-clothed police officers to Jewish homes to see if they would sell them wine, and five men fell for this entrapment.[157] Along with making arrests, the Ministry of National Economy enacted a further series of business restrictions against the Jewish community. Gulam Ghaus Khan, Secretary of State at the Ministry, banned Jews from entering the customs house, and abolished all middlemen pursuits. This was in addition to Jews being restricted from wholesale trade. Such anti-Jewish measures tend to give credence to the idea that the Ministry of National Economy was involved in generating income for the Pashtun elite. The British Legation in Kabul felt that these measures were justified, because it supported a pro-Pashtun economic policy and often espoused anti-Semitic views. The British Minister Sir Giles Squire wrote that: "it was only to be expected that the Afghan Government should take the opportunity of imposing further disabilities on the Jewish community." However, Squire mentioned that this would not "presumably prevent the Jews from continuing to work as they have done in the past under men of straw, but there is no doubt that their position has become more difficult." Two hundred had already applied to emigrate, though the Minister doubted if any nation would welcome them.[158]

One wonders if 'Abd al-Majid Khan was already back in contact with Kabul in November 1944, or if Muhammad Naim Khan acted entirely independently. While

[156] IOL L/PS/12/1660, D.M. O'Leary to I.L. Henderson (both in London), 18 April 1945, 21; USNA Record Group 840.1 Kabul – Confidential File 1947, vol. III, box 12, no. 840.1, Ely Palmer (Kabul) to Secretary of State (Washington), 30 May 1947; L/PS/12/1660, Paul Mason (Foreign Office) to Brotman, Secretary of Board of Deputies (both in London), 4 May 1945, 15; and G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, London), 24 February 1945, 28.

[157] USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul – General Records, 840.1, 16 April 1947.

[158] IOL L/PS/12/1660, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 24 February 1945, 28.

'Abd al-Majid Khan did not return to Kabul until 28 February 1946, some level of reconciliation may have occurred between the government in Kabul and 'Abd al-Majid Khan as the war's outcome became more apparent. 'Abd al-Majid Khan may have begun to involve himself in the workings of the Ministry of National Economy from Europe. In 1941, when 'Abd al-Majid Khan was still on good terms with the government in Kabul, he continued to supervise the Ministry of National Economy through phone calls, telegrams, and presumably letters. A similar dialogue may have occurred after his apparent reconciliation with Muhammad Hashim Khan.[159]

It is difficult to determine how Jews were able to find any paths to employment with so many levels of restrictions. In 1947, a US official offered one explanation:

> [T]he Jews are allowed one wholesale-firm and a certain import so they are depending on import-companies. These companies charged them during wartime the official ceiling-prices, but the Jewish traders had to pay in kind, especially in those goods the selling-companies wanted for export. These goods were only available on the black-market. And when the Government wanted to stop the raising of the prices, Ghulm Gaus [Gulam Ghaus] arranged for price-control in Jewish and Hindu-shops.[160]

It is clear that commerce was fraught with levels of barriers that were renewed periodically. In 1947, the World Jewish Congress concluded that the provision against involvement in the export trade meant that: "the community has been steadily reduced to a condition of impoverishment."[161]

Even when 'Abd al-Majid Khan was not in Afghanistan, the Ministry of National Economy continued to act according to anti-Semitic ideas and racist ideology, particularly after the mass arrests of 1944. This affected both non-Muslim trading communities, Hindus and Jews alike. Acting in the interests of the Government of India, the British Minister in Kabul found himself in the role of protector of the Indian

[159] IOL L/PS/12/455, Interception of telephone conversations with Berlin sent from Kabul (by P.C. Hailey) to H. Weightman (New Delhi), 6 March 1941.

[160] USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul-General Records, 16 April 1947, no. 840.1

[161] IOL L/PS/12/1660, Eastern Department, Foreign Office (London) to Chancery (Kabul), 8 April 1947, 9. See chapter 7 for further details.

community. This experience appears to have changed him. Subsequently, he became somewhat more sympathetic to the plight of smaller traders and ethnic minorities (though instances of prejudice still remained). In sharp contrast with previous British ministers, for the first time, Giles Squire examined Afghanistan's policies from the perspective of the disenfranchised. He noticed that: "the desire to take control of any form of commercial activity that shows signs of becoming really profitable persists not untinged with jealousy of Indian traders."[162] The minister was aware that wealthy Afghan businessmen wanted to eliminate all Indian competition, and would sometimes try to "extend the activities of monopoly concerns" with this aim. On several occasions, he was forced to intervene with high officials in order to protect the rights of Indian traders. In 1942, many shoemakers and barbers had to return to India, as their residence permits were not renewed. They were accused of lacking the proper licenses for their businesses, but this was because their applications were always refused. Ironically, after August 1947, Afghanistan had a great deal of difficulty maintaining trade across its southern border. The Hindu merchants once resident in Peshawar fled to India, and Afghanistan's trading links were severed. Afghanistan was forced to turn to the Soviet Union where it traded under the "most disadvantageous terms." This wrecked further havoc with Afghanistan's exports, aggravating a troubled economy which the British described as "at best ... chaotic."[163]

In 1943, another effort to limit the presence of non-Afghans in the workforce occurred. Laws were promulgated to limit brokers to those who had a permit, with the stipulation that permits would only be issued to Afghan nationals. The new legislation also stated that account books had to be written in the language of the country (Dari or Pashtun), "a provision which operated particularly harshly on the Indian traders."[164] Squire told his superiors that Indian merchants viewed these laws with "grave concern and regarded [them] as a fresh step for their elimination from trade."[165]

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[162] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 182-3.

[163] IOL L/WS/1/1169, Possibility of War between Pakistan and Afghanistan: Draft Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 8 July 1949, 85.

[164] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 183.

[165] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on the Economic Situation of Afghanistan, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 April 1944, 155.

First-hand evidence of these restrictions on individual Jews is scarce, but much can be deduced about the hardships faced by the community. While some Jews lived in Afghanistan for generations, most were not eligible to receive passports until the eve of their departure to Israel. (Indeed, according to Rahel Gol, an elderly Herati woman resident in Jerusalem, many did not obtain passports at all. They entered Palestine illegally in the 1930s and 1940s, and were often imprisoned for a year.)[166] Prominent international traders in the 1920s and early 1930s would have had travel documents, though their passports were only valid for several years. Afghan representatives abroad were infamous in their refusal to renew the passports of Jews.[167] While this would not have directly affected those resident in Afghanistan, the difficulty of receiving passports through the consular representatives can be seen as a barometer of governmental views towards the Jewish community. These new provisions would have been just one more set of obstacles which led to further impoverishment and misery.

Fortunately, Squire was able to mitigate some of the force of this new legislation. As British minister, he took "strong exception" to the clause regulating language, and after "protracted negotiations" with government officials, the laws were amended. Foreign brokers were allowed to obtain licenses, and could keep their books in any language they desired, as long as certified translations were provided when the government requested them. Squire explained to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, that the publication of these amendments were "hailed with delight by the Indian traders" who expressed "their feelings of gratitude at the protection of their interests by the Legation."[168]

Two points are of special notice here: first, that the British Minister took a pointed interest in the plight of Indian traders, and second, that the Afghan government changed

[166] Interview with Rahel Gol, Jerusalem, 12 July 2001. See also Heskel M. Haddad, *Jews of Arab and Islamic Countries* (New York: Shengold, 1984), 47.

[167] See BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/2, Secretary of Board of Deputies to A. Mundy, Jews' Temporary Shelter (both in London), 14 June 1939.

[168] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 183; and Report on the Economic Situation of Afghanistan, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 April 1944, 155.

its economic policy because of his intercession. As previously stated, 'Abd al-Majid, the architect of the shirkat system, resided in Germany and Switzerland during the war years, and because of his "prolonged absence" the process of monopolisation and the "movement towards totalitarian trade" slowed down.[169] Larger neighbouring powers also intervened, as Afghanistan was surrounded by, and consequently cooperated with the Allies. By June 1944, when the likely outcome of the war was becoming more apparent, levels of commitment to the Allies markedly increased, Afghanistan was anxious to express its desire for the "improvement of mutual relations and development of commercial ties."[170]

Britain, for her part, sometimes placed Afghanistan's "monopolistic tendencies" aside. The wartime necessity of maintaining "tranquillity in the country" and along Afghanistan's southern border came first. As Squire explained, in this pursuit, "every assistance has therefore [been] given for the preservation of the country's equilibrium." The basic needs of Afghanistan were ranked alongside those of India, and provided for accordingly. Britain even helped to broker the sale of 10,000 tons of Afghan wool for transport to the Soviet Union.[171] Such actions gave the United Kingdom even more leverage with Afghan government officials, especially regarding economic planning. In recognition of the assistance of the British government, Afghanistan changed some of its nationalistic economic policies. Squire wrote that Afghanistan's realisation of the importance of maintaining good relations with Great Britain and India "led to a considerable improvement in the position of the Indian trading community." He was unsure if this more egalitarian spirit would last long, but at least it was temporarily "in abeyance."[172]

As has been described previously, the experiences of Indians in Afghanistan paralleled those of the Jewish community. In this instance, the Jews did not often

[169] IOL L/PS/12/1553, R. Peel 16 February 1944, in a handwritten aside to the Report on the Economic Situation 1943, 178 verso; and Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 182-3.

[170] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Economic Report for the Period April-September 1944, 123.

[171] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 180-3.

[172] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on the Economic Situation of Afghanistan, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 April 1944, 150.

receive direct British protection although the Indians did. Nonetheless, after World War II, as American influence increased in Afghanistan, the position of the Jews improved. Just as Britain protected the Hindus, the United States came to play a very similar role for the Jewish community, through the convergence of serendipity and necessity.

The War-Time Economy: Stresses Masked

Throughout the war, Afghanistan's economy faced great challenges due to a dramatic reduction in trade with Germany and the Soviet Union, and the continued reign of poor management.[173] However, nature alleviated some troubles by providing abundant rain in the winters, which meant that crops and animals did well, as herdsmen did not have to pay for fodder.[174] Active British support and attention also helped, for the British saw a stable Afghan economy as another way to bolster India's defences. Afghanistan compensated for its trading deficit by sending more goods to India. Yet, when the post-war patterns of trade shifted, Afghanistan had difficulty compensating. This lack of flexibility, combined with crop failure, brought widespread hunger to Afghanistan after the war's end. As the state struggled to help the people feed and clothe themselves, the Shirkat or monopoly system started to dissolve. It failed to alleviate the sufferings of the people and consequently a freer market policy was introduced. While this was good news for ethnic minorities, it came as pyrrhic victory.

During the war, Giles Squire described Afghanistan's monopoly system as totalitarian, despite 'Abd al-Majid's claims of inclusive economics. Squire noted that this system had "prospered beyond expectations" where dividends ranged from fifteen to 150 percent. This policy's goals were two-fold: it aimed to improve and standardize products, and concentrate all "important lines of business in Afghan hands to the

[173] See for example: IOL L/PS/12/1553, Economic Report for Afghanistan 1946, 50; or IOL R/12/113, Fraser-Tytler (Kabul) to Viscount Halifax (London), 17 November 1939.

[174] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Minister of National Economy (Kabul) to F.H. Nixon, Export Credits Guarantee Department (London), 20 February 1940, 209-10.

exclusion of foreigners trading in the country." Both targets were met.[175] However, very little wealth found its way to improve the lives of ordinary people. The British reported that "discontented voices" were saying that the wealth of Afghanistan was "being utilized for the benefit of a coterie of *Sardars* [prominent Muhammadza'i personalities] by means of the State monopoly system of trade."[176]

Squire criticised the shirkat system by saying that it would not have been so bad if it had been fully run by the state. However, wealthy individuals bought most of the shares. The profits were not used by the government for the "amelioration of the people." Thus the classic paradigm of the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer occurred with the help of the state.[177] As the US became increasingly active in Afghanistan, its representatives confirmed this perspective and added that the "national Government [became] stronger."[178] Throughout much of the 1930s, when the warning bells of national discontent were sounding the danger of the shirkat system, British sources had not been very critical. This changed when World War II commenced, and and especially afterwards, when the entire population suffered as a result of these policies.

As mentioned, the stresses upon Afghanistan's economy in World War II were partially masked by abundant rain and fruitful harvests. Unlike their Indian and Iranian neighbours, in 1943 Afghanistan produced bumper crops throughout the country. The wheat harvest may have been the largest in fifty years. Despite this bounty, Squire estimated that the cost of living might have tripled during the war years.[179] After the war, academic research confirmed this hypothesis for the years between 1938 and 1949,

[175] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 181. It goes practically without mention that Jews were considered foreigners both by 'Abd al-Majid and the Foreign Office who would place quotation marks around the term British when it referred to Jewish traders in the region.

[176] IOL L/PS/12/1678, Weekly Summary from Peshawar, 15 August 1938, 46. Sardar is a Persian term meaning "'supreme military commander' literally chief or leader." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1995 ed., s.v. "Sardar." With thanks to May Schinasi for pointing out the nuances of this term's usage.

[177] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 182.

[178] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Kabul General Records 1948, box 17, file 850, Economic Matters, "Importance of the Shirkat System to the Development of Afghansitan," by David B. Wharton.

[179] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 188-90.

and the economist Maxwell Fry noted that there had not been an equivalent rise in salaries. This left most of the populace below the level of subsistence, especially in urban areas.[180] The British Minister explained that prices were uneven due to the difficulties of transportation, but often high, especially for imported items like tea, sugar, kerosene and cloth. This caused "considerable anxiety and distress." The government tried to control the prices of imported necessities, yet other official actions may have aggravated this delicate situation, or even precipitated hunger. Squire reported that people were very angry about their increasing impoverishment, inflation, and being compelled into "forced labour for Government work." They resented being restricted to growing only cotton and (sugar) beetroot instead of food grains; and then being forced to sell them to monopoly companies at fixed prices.[181] Several years later, this policy combined with a drought led to a famine.

The consequences of World War II changed Afghanistan's economic landscape. During the war, some weaknesses were mitigated through allied intervention. There were some problems, though not as severe as during the post-war years. Most importantly, the government could not supply the populace with sufficient food or clothing, and a black market arose. At this time, the Bank-i Milli worked closely with the government to "salvage whatever possible of the pre-war industries and trading concerns." By 1940, 'Abd al-Majid was appointed both Minister of National Economy and Governor of Da Afghanistan Bank. This effectively eliminated the reason for the latter institution's creation, which was to lower the incidence of corruption by managing the banks separately. In fact, all of Afghanistan's financial institutions were closely linked.[182] An article written in 1940 forecast that World War II would severely affect Afghanistan's development projects, as the European market for karakul would dry up.[183]

[180] Fry, 190-1.
[181] IOL L/PS/12/1553, G.F. Squire (Kabul) to Anthony Eden (London), 22 January 1944, 188-90.
[182] Ibid, 87-9, 106.
[183] Ibid, 40; citing A.E. Hudson and E. Bacon, "Inside Afghanistan Today" in *Asia*, 40: 3 (March 1940): 122.

Between 1939 and 1942, Afghanistan's economy was in recession, and from 1942 to 1949, government revenue declined rapidly. Afghanistan experienced severe inflation during World War II, as the prices of food, clothing, and rent increased over three hundred per cent. The government exacerbated the crisis by printing too much money. In 1935, twenty million afghanis were in circulation, in 1939, there were 180 million, and by 1946, 600 million afghanis in circulation.[184] Franck listed some of the problems facing Afghanistan's economy during the war. In addition to those already mentioned, he noted the: "excessive concentration of exports in a few agricultural crops, ... soil exhaustion [and] an inadequate supply of fuel and power."[185] Some shirkats dissolved, "while others became mere facades for proprietary business activites, promotion schemes, and outright profiteering." In order to regain control of Afghanistan's economy, the Bank-i Milli controlled the shirkats more closely and encouraged traders to invest in "sound projects."[186]

The Post-War Economy: Facing Scarcity and Famine

The post-war years brought further suffering. Between 1937 and 1955, the cost of living index in Kabul increased six fold, without an equivalent rise in wage earnings.[187] Fry explains that the severe inflation was "caused by deficit finance, a balance of payments surplus and wartime scarcities" all of which combined to wreck "havoc with the fiscal system."[188] The British representative at Kabul did not write an economic report during 1945, because of lack of staff. The report for 1946 was only patched together in the summer of 1947 after the Afghan economic picture was very bleak.

[184] Fry, 41; and Gregorian, 390.

[185] Peter Franck, "Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan," *Middle East Journal*, 3:3 (July 1949): 295.

[186] Ibid, 3:4 (October 1949): 432. In the 1960s, an American advisor to the Afghan government noted that it: "is prone to intervene in industrial and business decisions without having an adequate basis for determing the effects of such intervention." While this critique referred to projects carried out much later, it is also relevant for activities which commenced even in the 1930s. See Fry, 46 citing Nathan Associates, Economic Advisory Services Provided to the Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Afghanistan, September 1961 to June 1972: Final Report (Washington D.C.: Robert R. Nathan Associates, mimeograph, July 1972), 156.

[187] Peter Franck, "Economic Progress in an Encircled Land," in *Middle East Journal* 10:1 (Winter 1956), 51.

[188] Fry, 153.

Despite these omissions, it is a valuable source of information. With the help of secondary sources that draw from official Afghan government publications, it is possible to see in detail the shortcomings of the post-war economy.

'Abd al-Majid returned to Kabul in February 1946, after spending the war 'convalescing' in Switzerland. British intelligence reported that he was very disappointed by what he found. He claimed to be frustrated by the lack of social progress that had been made, as apparently this had been one of his goals in creating the shirkat system. He found that the monopoly system led to the enrichment of a few traders, instead of the population as a whole. In retrospect, this is quite incredible as surely 'Abd al-Majid must have been intimately aware of the problems of the grand scheme he fashioned. On his journey back to Afghanistan, 'Abd al-Majid Khan said to a British diplomat that seeing the war in Europe had changed him and that he sought to "reorganise the economic structure of the country, reversing his previous policy of monopolies in favour of freer trade."[189] One may theorize that the Minister of National Economy did indeed change his perspective by witnessing the destruction of Europe, grappling with his own ill health, overcoming his prejudice towards ethnic minorities and Soviet refugees, or even becoming alert to the contradictions inherent in fascist economics. Yet, 'Abd al-Majid Khan held significant shares in many of the monopoly companies. He was forced to change his policies only after they were dramatically unsuccessful, and even then he issued further limitations on traders.

After speaking privately of his economic epiphany, and almost immediately upon arrival home, 'Abd al-Majid Khan started another monopolistic enterprise. His stated goal was to alleviate the country's cloth shortage. Instead of improving the situation, his actions turned a severe shortage into a full-blown crisis. 'Abd al-Majid formed the Central Cooperative Depot to purchase and distribute cloth, and acquired 8.1 million yards of material to commence rationing. Merchants were told to sell their stocks of clothing within six weeks, and not to import any more items. While traders were told

[189] IOL L/PS/12/1562, Leading Personalities of Afghanistan 1948, 3.

that this was a short-term solution meant to last six months, the depot continued running for a year and a half until widespread discontent brought about its end.[190]

'Abd al-Majid was very concerned about widespread discontent, especially in the north "where [the] shortage of cloth is so acute that women have practically nothing to wear and people fall easy prey to Communist propaganda." Also, he threatened to resign if help did not come from the Government of India, for he felt that he could not be responsible for the consequences of Soviet activities. Squire was aware that 'Abd al-Majid was exaggerating, yet he reported to London that "Soviet activities certainly give grounds for anxiety" and the situation was grave, for the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister "have never struck quite such a note of panic."[191] Domestic revenue fell to one-quarter its 1939 value in 1948.[192]

Hunger also loomed on the horizon. While previously Afghanistan could feed herself, this was no longer the case, causing terrible anxiety as the price of wheat flour rose to unknown levels. Consequently, there was "much distress among the poorer classes and the Government was compelled to release its stocks of flour for sale to the public."[193] By January 1947, Squire wrote that the lack of wheat combined with "predictions of an unusually hard winter and the consequent dislocation of transportation made the future look dreadful." The situation became a national crisis, and the army released many of its lorries, along with all other means of transportation available, to bring American flour from Peshawar into the areas suffering famine. This alleviated some suffering. By the summer of 1947, 100,000 tons of flour were imported from the United States. Farmers stopped growing cotton for export and started growing wheat again.[194] Afghanistan had to import wheat and flour from the

[190] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on the Economic Situation of Afghanistan 1946, 60 and 62.

[191] IOL R/12/166, Telegram from Minister (Kabul) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), 19 March 1946.

[192] Fry, 155.

[193] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on the Economic Situation of Afghanistan 1946, 56.

[194] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during January 1947, 109-10; Notes by the External Department of the Indian Office (London), 30 June 1947, 50 verso (this was issued in response to Afghanistan's Economic Report of 1946); and Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during May and June 1947, 22.

United States again in 1953 and 1954. Generally, Afghanistan's annual production of food grains was three million tons. This placed the country on the edge of agricultural sufficiency, where droughts and other events could endanger the populace.[195]

Alongside the shortage of food and clothing, the international karakul market dropped. The price of karakul fur fell, from $13.50 to $9.00 per skin. As a result, none was exported during much of 1947.[196] In April 1947, Squire reported that two million skins from 1944 and 1945 were still unsold, along with the entire 1946 crop, which was not expected to sell until 1949. Yet, in that year, eighteen million skins remained unsold in New York, along with an additional four million in Afghanistan.[197] By 1947, traders were thought to lose as much as 140 million afghanis.[198] When karakul prices were low, generally Afghanistan would export more dried fruits and nuts to India. However, in January 1947, all pistachio nuts bound for India were turned back, as large amounts of them remained unsold and the price dropped by sixty per cent. After the war, countries did not have to produce as much, and the demand for imported goods dropped.[199]

Another endeavour to sell raw cotton also failed. While farmers were forced to grow the crop, its quality was not high enough for export.[200] The American embassy in Kabul explained to Washington that cotton and sugar beet production led to the enrichment of the elite, while the soil became increasingly depleted.[201] By the spring of 1947, four years of surplus wool also remained unsold in northern Afghanistan. The

[195] Franck 1956, 43.

[196] This includes the months of February, May, June, and July.

[197] Ali Mohammad, "Karakul as the most important article of Afghan Trade," *Afghanistan: Revue Trimestrielle* IV:4 (October-December 1949), 51.

[198] L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during April 1947, 40.

[199] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during February 1947, 96; Monthly Report during April 1947, 40.

[200] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during March 1947, 86; and notes by the External Department of the Indian Office (London), 30 June 1947, 50. (Issued in response to Afghanistan's Economic Report of 1946.)

[201] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Kabul General Records 1948, box 17, file 850, Economic Matters, "Importance of Shirkat System to the Development of Afghanistan," by David Wharton.

economy was collapsing, and the Afghan government had a very difficult time obtaining the hard currency necessary to make urgent purchases.[202]

These examples illustrate the fragility of an economy that should have been more robust. While the largely agricultural, rural means of production were clearly subject to the precarious whims of nature, they also faced the onslaught of 'Abd al-Majid's macro-economic policies. In 1947, a US report on the shirkat system stated that it had done "little to improve the condition of agriculture and nothing to alleviate the poverty of the farmers."[203] The economist Maxwell Fry argued that the central problem of the Afghan economy was its severe fragmentation, along with a geography that made travel difficult. The public sector was not linked to the formal or informal (bazaar) private economic spheres, both of which were in turn isolated from one other. Fragmentation affected the entire breadth of the economy from the agricultural, construction, industrial and foreign trade sectors to subsistence farmers. Paradoxically, government involvement made the situation worse. The attempt to guide the economy impeded development.[204]

Trouble that had been brewing for fifteen years bubbled over at the end of World War II. The economies of Europe collapsed. Afghanistan was no longer of vital importance in protecting the British Empire, since it was rapidly dissolving. Consequently, European powers were unable to subsidize the mistakes of the Ministry of National Economy, as their own markets collapsed after the war. Against the backdrop of a regional crisis, where India also suffered from famine, the mismanagement of the Ministry of National Economy became starkly apparent.[205] It is ironic that when fruit and nuts, wool and cotton were all lying in warehouses unsold,

[202] L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during April 1947, 40.

[203] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Kabul General Records, 1948, box 17, file 850, Economic Matters, "Importance of Shirkat System to the Development of Afghanistan," by David Wharton.

[204] Fry, 44-5, citing Nathan Associates, Economic Advisory Services Provided to the Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Afghanistan, September 1961 to June 1972: Final Report (Washington D.C.: Robert R. Nathan Associates, mimeo, July 1972), 5-6 and 156.

[205] IOL R/12/21, Laurence Collier (Foreign Office) to F.H. Nixon (Export Credits Guarantee Department) both in London, 30 July 1937.

the people of Afghanistan were hungry and struggled to clothe themselves. Although the weather may not have been ideal in the late 1940s, human error and gross mismanagement were greater factors in this terrible crisis.

Not surprisingly, by the early summer of 1947 the policies of the Ministry of National Economy were under heavy criticism and the public protested and demanded radical changes. Calls were made to abolish the shirkat system. The wool monopoly was dissolved early, in March, as four years of supply remained unsold. By July 1947, the parameters of the entire monopoly system shrunk considerably due to massive losses. No karakul was exported between May and July 1947, whereas in comparison, during May 1946, 10.6 million skins were exported.[206] The government's balance of trade shifted from a surplus of 2.1 million (Indian) rupees in 1946 to a deficit of 4.7 million rupees in 1947. The British Minister, Squire confirms that the complete monopoly on karakul skin and cotton piece goods was abolished in the summer of 1947. The Central Cooperative Depot's activities were sharply limited to procuring material from abroad, while internal trade in cotton clothing was restored to "normal channels." Nonetheless, cloth merchants were still encouraged to form groups to absorb the depot's remaining stock at controlled prices. For two more years, the government maintained some control over the export of karakul fur, as merchants could not sell a consignment of less than 5,000 skins abroad. This policy was considerably less restrictive, and when the karakul monopoly could no longer pay for an entire year's crop, it lost control of Afghanistan's market.[207] By 1949, the karakul monopoly was completely abolished, as Afghanistan struggled to compete with the Soviet Union and South Africa. These nations were better able to sort and prepare their skins for sale, principally for export to the United States.[208]

[206] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions during March 1947, 86, and Report on the Economic Conditions during May and June, and July 1947, Appendix A, 26 and 10.

[207] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on Economic Conditions during July 1947, 6 and 8; and Report on the Economic Conditions during May and June 1947, 19.

[208] "Karakul as the most important article of Afghan Trade," by Ali Mohammad in *Afghanistan: Revue Trimestrielle*, IV:4 (October-December 1949), 51.

In 1946, 'Abd al-Majid Khan 'negotiated' with Jews for the first time. He spoke to the Kabuli community, and offered them permission to export and import goods – with the exception of karakul, furs, and carpets – if they were sure to maintain a positive balance of trade. In return for this concession, the community had to agree to buy half a million afghanis worth of shares in the Bank-i Milli. By April 1947, Jews were allowed to buy shares of any new factory, as long as their amount remained under thirty per cent to preclude management rights.[209]

In an attempt to achieve some degree of development, small entrepreneurial minorities in Afghanistan were pushed aside. The economic patterns that both Hindus and Jews followed traditionally could have provided a blueprint for progress, and shown larger groups in Afghanistan how to achieve economic success in a very complicated financial climate. While karakul flocks were Afghanistan's main source of hard currency earnings in the period studied, the flocks of sheep only became a part of Afghanistan's bounty after the Soviet Union was fully established in Central Asia. Afghanistan gained this valuable source of income precisely because it provided a refuge to those fleeing intolerance and oppression. Turkmen shepherds fled with their flocks, along with Bukharan Jews who were expert in preparing the lambskins, and finding markets throughout the world. While the skins themselves were valued, these groups of people, and their sets of skills were not. Consequently, the quality of karakul skins consistently declined. This was a result of Turkmen immigrants remaining marginalized and very poor, while an orchestrated campaign was carried out against Bukharan Jews, which quickly grew to encompass all Jews in Afghanistan. Ironically, in 1935, the British noted that forcing the Jewish community out of the north meant that "the only class of trader with expert knowledge" disappeared.[210] For the Jewish population, fifteen years of prejudice directed at them, in addition to a desperate economic situation was too much to tolerate. Many tried to escape illegally into Iran or India.

[209] USNA, Record Group 84 Kabul - General Records, 16 April 1947, no. 840.1.

[210] IOL L/PS/12/1553, H.M. Minister (Kabul) to H.M. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (London), 24 January 1935, 520 verso and 521.

Chapter Seven:

'Aliya[1]: Messianic Zionism and Leaving Afghanistan

"We hope for your salvation and also for your response."

Synopsis

This chapter examines the process of mass Jewish emigration from Afghanistan. While some members of the community left during the 1930s and 1940s, 4,500 remained in Herat and Kabul, and the vast majority departed in the early 1950s, after Muhammad Zahir Shah authorized legal departure. In 1949, communal letters were sent to Israeli authorities describing their longing for the Holy Land and an intense desire to be a part of the religious and cultural renewal of Zion. The majority of sources in this chapter come from the Central Zionist Archives, and like these communal letters, this is the first time that they have been brought to the attention of an audience in English. Augmenting religious reasons, Jews in Afghanistan based their desire for 'aliya on economic rationale, with the continuation of restrictions against the community even after the demise of the shirkat system, and as poor harvests and famine blighted the region. Departure was also based on social factors, with young people facing denigrating army service and instances of forcible conversion.

Even before the community left Afghanistan, it was upset by the inefficient Yishuv bureaucracy which allowed Jewish prisoners to remain incarcerated. Afghan authorities were willing to release them, with the provision that they were furnished with visas for Palestine. The Jewish Agency was not forthcoming, and the men languished in a Kabuli prison. In an exceptional gesture, however, the British Minister to Kabul gave three hundred visas for India to Jews in 1946. Sir Giles Squire's change of heart may be attributed to increased empathy based on his advocacy on behalf of Hindus, or perhaps a re-evaluation of the high cost of anti-Semitism. In January 1947,

[1] *'Aliya* literally means 'ascending' or 'going up' and is used specifically in reference to the Holy Land, *Eretz Yisrael*. The antonym is *Yerida* or 'descent'.

all Jews from Afghanistan in Peshawar were deported, and this increased the anxiety of those who found refuge in the courtyard of a Bombay synagogue. At that point, the offices of the Yishuv, along with other Jewish organisations, took their fears of deportation seriously, and used diplomatic channels to avert a forced return to Afghanistan. After this crisis, the conflict between the Jewish Agency and the Afghanistani va'adot in *Eretz Yisrael* intensified. The officials of the Yishuv wanted only healthy young people, whereas the refugees in India wanted to immigrate *en masse* – irrespective of health or age.

In 1949, the position of the Afghan government shifted dramatically, and legal emigration was permitted. A series of reason are responsible for this shift. They include a change in leadership, as Muhammad Hashim Khan and 'Abd al-Majid Khan both left office. Afghanistan advocated voiceferously for an independent Pashtunistan, and became more amenable to international pressure in seeking support for this position. Muhammad Zahir Shah, now ruling without a regent, also had positive feelings towards the Jews. This may have been based on the ethnogenesis myth that Pashtuns are one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Politically Muhammad Zahir Shah also wanted improved relations with the US, which encouraged Jewish civil rights in Afghanistan. Small groups of Jews began to leave in 1950 via Iran. After arrival in Teheran, they experienced a great deal of disillusionment with Israeli bureaucracy as they remained for months in abject poverty, menaced by the local police force. By 1953, most were able to arrive in Israel, where they faced new challenges. The situation of those who remained in Afghanistan improved during the 1960s and 1970s, though they also felt the need to leave, particularly after the Soviet invasion.

First Contact with the Israeli Government

In the late 1940s, the Jewish community of Afghanistan still had internal refugees (after being forbidden from living in all but the three main cities), were banned from most forms of employment, and faced post-war shortages and famine along with the rest of the population. Exact figures are impossible to obtain, but the Jewish Agency's

envoy in Teheran estimated that 4,500 Jews lived in Afghanistan after World War II.[2] Some engaged the services of smugglers and escaped by way of India or Iran, but much of the community remained in Afghanistan – especially in the city of Herat.[3] However, the greatest impetus to leave came with the creation of the state of Israel, when Zionism coursed through the community. One Jewish resident of Kabul explained that when the community learned of Israel's establishment "our joy knew no bounds."[4] S. Landshut explains that the foundation of the state of Israel brought a "new spirit of hope – almost Messianic in its fervour – reminiscent of that among Jews in other remote Muslim countries."[5] An examination of letters sent to Israel from the community show that the expectations of Afghanistani Jews were not partially but rather fully Messianic.

At this time of great happiness and rejoicing in the creation of the state of Israel, the community was put in clear physical danger, as many individuals in Afghanistan viewed the small community as an enemy of the Muslim world. In Kabul, the chief of police risked his own life to stop an imminent mob attack.[6] In Herat, the Jewish community did not fare as well. Soon after the declaration of Israeli independence, a knife-wielding assailant entered the women's section of a synagogue, killed three women and two children, and injured four others. He was only stopped after the men in the synagogue were able to capture him. Ten months later in Kabul, two young Jewish men were attacked by ten Muslim assailants. They were first robbed and then beaten to death. In an apparent effort to hide their bodies, they were secretly buried on the grounds of the American embassy. (US officials were unaware of this crime.) Only after the assiduous efforts of the young men's parents were their bodies exhumed and given a Jewish burial.[7]

[2] CZA S6/6787, Report on the Situation of Afghan Jews by Sassoon Siman-Tov, envoy to the Department of Middle Eastern Jews of the Jewish Agency in Teheran, 19 September 1950.

[3] Haddad, 47.

[4] Avihail and Brin, 58-9.

[5] Landshut 1950a, 70.

[6] Avihail and Brin, 77.

[7] CZA S6/6787, Report on the Situation of Afghan Jews written by Sassoon (SiSi) Siman-Tov, envoy of the Department of Middle Eastern Jewry at the Jewish Agency in Teheran, on 19 September 1950. Copies distributed to high officials including Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion.

Despite these attacks, the Jews in Afghanistan were overjoyed by the creation of the State of Israel. For fifteen years, (between 1934 and 1949) the Jewish community of Herat was unable to communicate directly with the outside world. In the late 1940s, the position of the Afghan government relaxed towards the Jews. Finally, sending correspondence abroad was legal, and the leadership was able to post a letter to Tel Aviv.[8] The spelling, vocabulary, grammar, structure, and style of this letter are infused with ancient and prayer book Hebrew. It provides a baseline, and in one sense, it is the beginning of Afghanistani Jewry's direct interaction with the outside world after being isolated, and forbidden from international commerce and travel. Some letters are kept in the Central Zionist Archives, and provide a wonderful insight. This is the first time they have been brought to the attention of an audience in English. In what is perhaps the first letter sent openly to the government of Israel, Yosef and Shmuel Cohen wrote on behalf of the Herati community. This document provides a clear view of the community's feelings. It is an extraordinary letter, part prayer and part request, with great hope for religious and physical redemption. An unabridged copy of this letter is provided in the appendix.

> To Your Honour, the High and Mighty Government of Israel – Shalom!
>
> ... Now, in the end of days, from a flight of trouble and distress, G-d has enlightened the people Israel with salvation and bravery. ...Your Honour, we are in the darkness of bitter exile, and do not feel the sweetness of the shining light upon us, and it is like we are dreaming. ... We believe that G-d has sworn an eternal covenant to bring us back to the Land, and even if this day of wandering was very long, and our people were scattered from one side of the heavens to another, we still hope that the time has come to return to our homeland, and to renew our youth in the land, like an eagle. ...
>
> [W]e have to let you know, Your Excellency, how horrible our low situation is. Everyday our exile becomes greater, we are left without work, all the doors of commerce are locked to us, all the gates of the land are closed to us. Nobody can come or go, neither from inside nor from outside. Exile causes us such grief, we don't have any more strength to suffer, to make a livelihood, or provide for the necessities of life. We sold all our household goods, and we are left with empty hands, and we

[8] Landshut 1950a, 67.

don't know what will become of us, and therefore we turn to you, asking Your Excellency to help us as soon as possible, for if our exile continues for more months, all of us will be lost from lack of means to support ourselves. Please, please, please we beg you that as long as we are still alive, spare us, have mercy upon us. ...

This is the day that we hope for, let us rejoice in it, it has been for 2,000 years that the people Israel has been in exile, and now the time has come for the prophets' visions to come true. 'To gather you up from heaven with me.' Now this day of salvation has come to the entire people Israel who are in exile. Yet, this time is troublesome for us, as we are in great danger in the midst of the exile of Ishmael, but we hope we will be saved from that through the grace of G-d and through Your Honour's help, and we hope for your salvation and also for your response. May you have peace forever, amen.

Signed by the humble Yosef Cohen and the Cohen of the pitied community, Mr. Shmuel Cohen.[9]

This letter displays extraordinary messianic longing. The community in Afghanistan saw the creation of Israel through a biblical lens, if they could arrive in *Eretz Yisrael*, they would find salvation. Later letters show some awareness of political Zionism, yet the initial ones are full of religious fervour. While the community was exposed to the forces of other ideologies like communism, capitalism, and nationalism, these were often filtered by the interpretations and reactions of those in Afghanistan. With Zionism, the exposure was far more direct, as the Jews interacted with some of the key figures in the establishment of the state of Israel, without the communication delays of earlier times. Consequently, their reactions shifted in a matter of months, as opposed to years. At first, the leaders of the community saw David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizman, and other top Israeli officials as viewed as intermediaries to the Messiah, yet this quickly changed to disappointment as the bungled efforts of the Jewish Agency became apparent.

The Jews of Afghanistan sent several more letters infused with prayer in 1949. Their beauty is unrivalled, and they deserve a careful examination. While the Cohens

[9] CZA S5/11616, Letter of 23 Sivan 5709, 20 June 1949 from the Jewish community of Herat to the Government of Israel, a type-written copy provided by the Va'ad Hitahadut Olei Afghanistan, Tel Aviv. With special thanks to Nili Heled for help translating this document.

received a quick reply from Israel, that letter was not preserved, however their next missive is. Much of the second letter repeats the information of the first one, yet in order to show its importance, it is signed by seventy rabbis and leaders of the community. New points include an even greater fear of anti-Semitism: "In this country, they look upon us with evil. And it is a surprise that in the nineteenth century [sic for twentieth-century], after World War II, that there are still anti-Semitic and fascist countries left in the world." They go on to say that the Holocaust took place in "the democratic, moral, and cultured world on the continent of Europe," but that these Jews feel themselves to be living in the "exile of Ishmael, a people ... without culture at all."[10] This derisive comment implies that they feel their situation is far less hopeful. This maybe due to the news they received about the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Herati Jewish community are convinced that they are about to face another Shoah and implore the Israeli government to get them out.

Interestingly enough, the Jews of Bahrain expressed similar sentiments to the Jewish Agency. They felt that they too, faced persecution more severe than that of the Third Reich. Ezra Zeloof smuggled out two letters (in care of a friend in New York) to Jerusalem. He described an anti-Jewish riot that the community endured there in the winter of 1947. "Each house has its own story of how brutally the Arabs have treated them and how their houses were completely swept away and looted. ... If the Germans have done harm to the Jews the Arabs are doing more."[11] The community in Bahrain was even smaller than that of Afghanistan, comprising only several hundred individuals. Zeloof's letters speak in a voice far less infused with religious language, yet still very poetic. He directly addresses the struggle for a Jewish state as well as those killed in the Holocaust. "This home should be attained at all cost. If we have lost three million Jews in Europe let a few of us be sacrificed here. We shall be proud to take part in your troubles in a small way. But I think that it would no[t] be impossible

[10] CZA S86/75, copy of a letter sent by the Jewish community of Herat, to the government of Israel, received in Jerusalem on 3 July 1949 (6 Tammuz 5709).

[11] CZA S25/5291, Ezra Zeloof (unsigned) in Bahrein to the Secretary of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jerusalem 20 January 1948. See also Ezra Zeloof (Bahrein) via Nathan Scott (Syracuse, New York) to Secretary, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 13 December 1947.

for you to save this small community here."[12] Jews in Afghanistan also wanted to be saved and even redeemed by the new Israeli state.

Religious and Economic Rationale for 'Aliya

Four months before Jews in Afghanistan were able to write directly to Israel, those in Kabul contacted the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow, to ask if it were possible to secure transit for *'aliya* or emigration to Israel via the Soviet Union. This was during the brief spring of Soviet-Israeli relations, and they hoped that their request would be granted, as "the Government of Russia is one of those who love us." This letter clearly expresses the community's feelings about Israel, the Holocaust and the desire to emigrate.

> Dear Sir! Every day we read the papers and every night we listen to the radio from all the countries of the world, and when we hear the words: Government of Israel, Country of Israel, Army of Israel, we cry in the midst of our joy. But it is our regret that we are not able to do something. Dear Sir, seven years continuously we have sat mourning and crying for the six million of our brothers and our flesh who were destroyed at the hands of the Nazis. After the proclamation from the Government of Israel and the freedom of our homeland, and the rebirth of our people and the gathering of our exiles, we do not hope to win and to see the building of our lovely land. It is because we are captive behind an iron wall, and cannot leave. Dear Sir, we feel very humiliated that we are not able to participate in the freedom of our land.[13]

This extract summarizes the main reasons for 'aliya, not only amongst the Jews of Afghanistan but also among communities throughout the world, namely the fervent joy over the creation of the Jewish state, the sorrow over the Holocaust and an intense desire to be a part of this religious and cultural renewal.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Letter written to the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow from Jews in Kabul and sent on 6 February 1949, as reproduced by Reuven Kashani, "*'Aliyat Yehudei Afghanistan l'Eretz Yisrael,*" *Ba-Ma'arakha* 233 (May 1980): 12-13, quoting Mordechai Namir, *Shlihot b'Moskva*, 349.

Most Jewish communities in the Muslim world began to dissolve with the creation of Israel. However, some of the rationale behind the departure of the community in Afghanistan is distinct – most notably long-term economic restrictions. They started with the foundation of the shirkat system, and remained in effect even in the 1960s. It appears that under Amanullah, Jews were forbidden from all sectors of economic activity except trade, and only a few years later, this occupation was severely restricted. In 1950, it was reported that Jews were only allowed to be cloth merchants, due to its shortage.[14] In fact, one informant, Leah Dil explained that her father sold cloth in Herat in the 1950s.[15] Another, Eliahu Bezalel, recounted that between the time Muhammad Daud Khan was the governor of the Northern province and when he ruled Afghanistan (1933-1974), Jews were officially forbidden from international trade. However, they would circumvent this restriction by taking a Muslim partner, who would then be the front for the company. He would receive ten percent of the profits for following directives – and the Jewish businessman would avoid the high tax rate of forty per cent imposed on non-Muslim businesses. Thus, both parties were pleased by this arrangement, and eventually, the Muslim front man would learn enough to establish his own company.[16]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the deteriorating economic situation within Afghanistan in the late 1940s certainly increased the desire to emigrate. After World War II, Afghanistan along with neighbouring India, faced a famine, and karakul stopped being exported altogether in 1947. As the Jewish community had already withstood years of state-directed impoverishment, this must have been another terrible burden to suffer. In July 1945, Daniel Gol, chairman of the Jerusalem Va'ad explained to the Board of Deputies that Jews in Herat had been reduced to a state of penury. He wrote that almost all households sold their "meagre belongings" for food, but now,

[14] Landshut 1950a, 68.
[15] Interview with Leah Dil, Holon, Israel, 9 July 2001
[16] Interview with Eliahu Bezalel, Ramat Gan, Israel, 12 July 2001.

"there are no further sources to satisfy their hunger. If assistance is not offered to them promptly, the future holds out only the certainty of total destruction."[17]

Jews left Afghanistan also because they felt that the government was strongly influenced by Nazi Germany, before and during World War II. As chapter 5 demonstrates, much of this may not have been direct Nazi influence, but after experiencing so much suffering, they may have feared that their fate would be the same as that of European Jewry. In one example, refugees in Bombay wrote that Nazi propaganda increased greatly during World War II and brought Muslim governments to the side of the Axis powers.[18] On the other hand, the Tel Aviv Va'ad[19] indulged in some strongly felt but inaccurate hyperbole when it said that Afghanistan's Jewish population endured a greater torture than that of the Holocaust, "for the Nazis concentrated them in camps and fed them, but in the Afghanistan purgatory they walk about freely but cannot earn their living. This is even worse than an annihilation decree." The Tel Aviv Va'ad referred to Lamentations: "'It is better to be the prey of the sword than the prey of hunger.'"[20] Individuals believed that their persecution was inspired by the Third Reich, and so they identified closely with the fate of European Jewry.

Indeed, the Jewish communities of the Yishuv, Britain, and America began to be very concerned about the worsening condition of Mizrahim. In 1945, a book published by the Jewish Trades Advisory Council claimed that the Jews in Muslim countries were "the most suffering members of the Jewish people outside countries previously occupied by the Nazis." The author then called upon world Jewish community to "be

[17] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/3, Daniel Gol, *Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan b'Eretz Yisrael*, (Jerusalem) to Selig Brodetsky (London), 5 July 1945.

[18] CZA S6/5404, letter from the Afghanistani Jewish refugees in Bombay to the Head of the (World) Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, received on 14 January 1948.

[19] The full name of this organisation was: *Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan* or the Committee of Jewish Immigrants of Afghanistan in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, and it was founded in the late 1940s.

[20] CZA C2/1659, letter to World Jewish Congress from Committee of Jewish Immigrants of Afghanistan (both parties in Tel Aviv), 22 January 1950; original Hebrew version found in CZA S6/6787 but sent to the Jewish Agency instead of the World Jewish Congress.

ready to stand by for the protection of Jewish rights."[21] After the Holocaust, the amount of visible intra-Jewish prejudice declined as various communities realised the necessity of working cooperatively to achieve common goals, especially the protection of endangered communities and the establishment of the modern state of Israel.[22]

The Appeal of Zionism

Oppression continued and may have been increasingly difficult to endure, as it seems there was an intense desire to immigrate to the Land of Israel. Before the establishment of the state of Israel, options included emigration to colonial India or the British Mandate of Palestine. Yet afterwards, most of the community no longer wanted to remain in diaspora. Afghanistan's Jewish community dissolved for the most part *after* it felt hopeful. They became far more impatient to leave once they saw other Jews travelling to the source of what they believed was their spiritual and physical redemption.[23] While their circumstances had been very difficult since 1933, they became intolerable in the late 1940s. At the same time, political Zionist movements across the world found fertile ground for secular ideals that could be closely linked to traditional religious values. In a sense, this was the genius of political Zionism; it was able to take traditional and secular Jews from across the world, living in vastly differing circumstances, and unite them in an ideological and religious belief system that almost all found meaningful. Among Afghanistan's Jewish population, the shifts from fully religious Zionism to one more influenced by secular ideals occurred very quickly, and even before their arrival in the Holy Land. The Jews of Afghanistan travelled to Israel for the same reasons that traditional Jews all over the world left their homes – they believed that the reestablishment of the ancient Jewish homeland signalled the coming of a messianic age, and they wanted to participate in this event, and feel "the sweetness of this shining light upon us."[24]

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[21] N[oah] Barou, *Jews in Work and Trade* (London: Trades Advisory Council, 1945), 32.

[22] For evidence of the Board of Deputies' dramatic change, see file BoD ACC/C11/13/31, entitled Jews in Moslem Countries: Aden, Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya and Morocco.

[23] Interview with Eliahu Bezalel, Ramat Gan, Israel, 12 July 2001.

[24] CZA S5/11616, letter of 23 Sivan 5709, 20 June 1949, from the Jewish community in Herat to the Government of Israel, copy provided by the Tel Aviv Va'ad.

Jews within Afghanistan were unable to set up a Zionist organisation, as that was simply too dangerous. Thus, they had community members in Bombay serve as their agents. In June 1948, Pinhas Amram of the Afghan Commercial Company in Bombay wished to form a Zionist organisation with the hope of stimulating this movement within Afghanistan. The idea was warmly welcomed in Jerusalem. An official in the Zionist Organisation's Executive appreciated the desire of Afghanistani Jewry to "identify themselves with our national aspirations and the reestablishment of the Jewish people in their ancient home." Amram was told that the price of a shekel (which functioned as a fund-raising certificate) was fixed at one rupee both in India and in Afghanistan.[25] One wonders how the offices of the Zionist Organisation would have absorbed the Afghan currency, as it was difficult to exchange even in Peshawar at this time.

In the autumn of 1950, a communal letter was sent from Kabul to the President of Israel, Chaim Weizman.[26] It was signed by at least twenty-two men. While maintaining much of the religiously infused language of the letters from Herat, it signals a dramatic shift. This letter is typewritten in Hebrew, and it has an angry tone. The author(s) play upon the word 'Chaim' which is used to refer to the president and also evokes its literal meaning of 'life'. This is highly significant as only the year before the leaders of Israel had been described as almost akin to the Messiah. Now, this letter plays with the marked informality of addressing the President of Israel by his first name. The document shows a much greater awareness of journalism and literature than previous letters as it commences almost like an epic novel.

[25] CZA S5/1338, letter from L. Taube, Executive of the Zionist Organisation, Jerusalem to Pinhas R. Amram, c/o Afghan Commercial Company, chairman of the Afghan Zionist Society, Bombay, 28 June 1948.

[26] CZA S6/6787, letter signed by at least 22 members of the Kabuli Jewish community to Chaim Weizman, President of Israel, 12 [Mar]heshvan 5711 (approximately Oct-Nov 1950).

> The noble voice of 5,000 souls of Israel, pillaged and plundered, is surrendered under a foreign yoke. During 2,000 years, they did not forsake their religion or nation in the midst of exile. And waiting ...for the Day of Salvation to arise, from the distant land across the Hindu Kush, from the land of Afghanistan, they appeal before the Great Leader Doctor ... CHAIM WEIZMAN![27]

It then continues in direct, factual manner, explaining events clearly and in a chronological manner. The letter explains that 2,000 Jews from Afghanistan immigrated to the Holy Land between 1925 and 1950, and describes how all those remaining have relations in Israel. During World War II, the community was closed off, surrounded by "metal walls." While in the summer of 1950, 1,500 people were granted permission to leave Afghanistan, very few had arrived in Israel. Most were en route or resident in Iran. The authors explain to Israel's president that every day they receive letters from those in Iran describing their difficult situation. These Kabuli Jews are angry that after so much sacrifice – enduring even famine – their brethren remain in Iran, with only fifty people per month being granted permission to leave. The letter then describes the mood within families in Afghanistan, and how the consequent social structure has shifted.

> In each house there is a war of brothers over crossing to the Land of Israel – a son [fights] with his father, and a man with his wife [imitates this strife]. Many women left their husbands and went with their sons. ... Women sold items from their houses ... so that they could emigrate as soon as possible.[28]

The patriarchal social structure exhibited cracks as younger people and women were more certain about leaving. In the letter, fear is expressed for their children's future, as they want them to grow up "with the blessings of wisdom and culture" in the Land of Israel. Another way to view these statements is that anxiety about cultural and economic breakdown is expressed as family disputes.[29] The letter also asks Weizman to instruct the Jewish Agency in Teheran to increase the quota of those allowed to make

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] With special thanks to Caitlin Adams for bringing this insight (along with countless others) to my attention.

'aliya from Teheran. The last line of the letter plays upon the president's given name in the form of an urgent, personal prayer and supplication: "Return our Remnant to the Land of Israel, to see the face of the Messiah, the G-d of Jacob, in light, the face of the King. Chaim!"[30]

Jews from Afghanistan were disappointed by the failings of the Jewish Agency even before they left Herat or Kabul. This letter is significantly more aware of Western patterns of description and prose. It displays anger while at the same time is less formal and discusses non-religious concerns. The letter shifts dramatically from the first missives sent to the Israeli government, and shows how the honeymoon of uninterrupted adoration did not last long. Increased communication presented a more realistic view of the Government of Israel's weaknesses as well as strengths.

Along with the desire to reach the state of Israel, some conditions became increasingly intolerable to the community in Afghanistan. This included drafting of Jewish men into the army. In the Islamic world, Jews and Christians were considered *'ahl al-dhimma* or protected people under the Pact of 'Umar. This meant that they faced a series of restrictions, including the payment of extra taxes, and wearing distinctive marks to show that they were not Muslims. They were also forbidden from joining the army. (Clearly, this was one restriction that had a positive angle.) However, by 1945, Jewish men were drafted into the army for the first time, while still having to pay the *jizya*, or head tax on non-Muslim residents. Army service turned into an opportunity for humiliation. Young Jewish men now shared the burden with the rest of the urban Muslim population, but were only allowed to perform the most menial of tasks, such as cleaning stables and streets, and paving roads. They were not trusted with a weapon, and faced animosity from other soldiers. It was also reported to Sassoon Siman-Tov of the Jewish Agency in Teheran that Jewish soldiers had to turn

[30] CZA S6/6787, letter signed by at least 22 members of the Kabuli Jewish community to Chaim Weizman, President of Israel, 12 [Mar]heshvan 5711 (approximately Oct-Nov 1950).

over their small wages to their commanding officer as protection money, to ensure their safety from attack.[31]

Instances of forcible conversion of young people also occurred. These events shook the community to its foundation, especially as they were able to do very little to regain their children. Siman-Tov reported that between 1935 and 1950, three young men and two young women were compelled to accept Islam. Some of them were charged with committing a crime against Islam, and given the choice of conversion or death. Siman-Tov stated that they converted because of "hypnosis and fear."[32] While these occurrences were limited, each instance reinforced the community's fear and isolation. According to Leah Dil, who was a child in Herat during this period, girls did not attend school for long, or venture out too far from home because of this ever-present worry.[33]

Anger at an Inefficient Bureaucracy and Enquiries by the World Jewish Congress

By February 1946, the Afghan authorities agreed to release some long-term Jewish prisoners, if they could immediately leave the country. They included Shmuel Dadash Shabtai and Shmuel Ben Hanania Yekutiel who were charged with espionage in 1933. Dadash had indeed unwittingly assisted the Soviets in the early 1930s while working in Moscow.[34] (See chapter 4 for further details.) The Jerusalem Va'ad contacted the Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem and asked him to assist in the effort to obtain visas for these two men, as it was of the highest urgency.[35] The Jerusalem Va'ad also wrote to the British Minister in Kabul. Squire reported that the prisoners might have a hard time being granted permission to enter India because of the Jewish refugees from Afghanistan already in Bombay. But, if the Jewish Agency would give immigration

[31] CZA S6/6787, report on the Situation of Afghan Jews written by Sassoon (SiSi) Siman-Tov, envoy of the Department of Middle Eastern Jewry at the Jewish Agency in Teheran, on 19 September 1950; see also Yehoshua 1992, 236-7.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Interview with Leah Dil, Holon, Israel, 9 July 2001.

[34] Interview with Ben-Zion Yehoshua, Jerusalem, 15 July 2001.

[35] CZA S25/5291, Daniel Gol of the Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan (Jerusalem) to Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Ouziel (Jerusalem), 5 July 1945.

certificates to those refugees already in India, then this might facilitate the Government of India's willingness to accept those imprisoned. After being approached by Daniel Gol, a prominent member of the Afghanistani Jewish community in Jerusalem, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, the head of the Va'ad Leumi, wrote to the director of the 'Aliya Department at the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem. He asked for certificates to be granted to the refugees so that the prisoners, most importantly Dadash and Yekutiel, could also be released. Once again the Jewish Agency refused.[36] The precise reason for this refusal is unknown, however one can surmise that it is because requests from Afghanistan were not viewed with as much urgency as those from Holocaust survivors in Europe.

The Jerusalem Va'ad became incensed. Daniel Gol wrote to the 'Aliya Department, saying: "IN EIGHT YEARS YOU HAVE NOT GIVEN US EVEN ONE CERTIFICATE. I would always present requests, and you would push me away." Gol was furious that the Jewish Agency did not provide assistance for the refugees in Peshawar, Karachi, and above all, Bombay, when they were forced to camp in the courtyard of a synagogue. Gol claimed that the Afghanistani Jews in Eretz Yisrael were the first to help protect the homeland, and only when asking for immigration certificates were they pushed away. In response, the 'Aliya Department managed to procure a paltry five certificates.[37]

One year before the crisis commenced, in October 1945, an agent of the World Jewish Congress' New York branch, Arieh Tartakower, wrote to the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and asked if his organisation could assist the Jewish community in Afghanistan, either politically or materially. Tartakower wanted to know if the World Jewish Congress could bring public attention to the situation of Afghanistan Jewry or ask for international pressures to be brought to bear. He also offered to send food,

[36] CZA S6/1431, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, Director of the Va'ad Leumi (General Council) of the Jewish Community in Palestine to Moshe Shapira, Director of the Department of 'Aliya, Jewish Agency, 18 February 1946.

[37] CZA S6/1431, Daniel Gol of the Va'ad Yehudei Afghanistan b'Eretz-Yisrael to Moshe Shapira Department of 'Aliya, Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), on 18 February 1946; and Secretary of the 'Aliya Department, Jewish Agency to the Irgun 'Olei Afghanistan (both of Tel Aviv), on 12 March 1946.

clothing, and medicine to Afghanistan.[38] This is precisely what the communal organisations of Afghanistani Jewry in Palestine had been asking Jewish institutions of the Yishuv to procure. In July 1945, the Jerusalem Va'ad wrote to the Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael, Ben-Zion Meir Hai Ouziel and asked for his intervention with the Jewish Agency. They wanted the Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish American philanthropic organisation, to open an office in Kabul or Peshawar or to send money through their group to Herat as they expected that a famine was about to strike Afghanistan.[39] Soon it did. Although the Chief Rabbi wrote strenuously worded letters on their behalf, no office for the benefit of Afghanistani Jewry ever opened.

The Jewish Agency in Jerusalem's response to Tartakower explains the course of Afghanistan Jewry's experiences for the next seven years. The Jewish Agency said that it would take care of the material needs of Afghanistan's Jews through its office in Bombay, but that the World Jewish Congress should organize political action.[40] Despite these assurances, the Jewish Agency appears never to have sent aid into Afghanistan, and provided very little of it to refugees waiting in Bombay or Teheran. But at the end of 1945, a far larger refugee crisis engulfed Europe, as Holocaust survivors were unable or unwilling to return to their countries of origin. Some who arrived home in Eastern Europe found another round of persecution waiting for them. In Poland, there were occurrences of Jews being murdered by their neighbours after returning from the concentration camps.[41] For obvious reasons, the Jewish Agency chose to spend its limited funds on the survivors of the Shoah. As bad as the experiences in Afghanistan were, they still paled in comparison to the planned and regulated destruction of European Jewry.

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[38] CZA S6/4659, Arieh Tartakower of the World Jewish Congress in New York to Eliahu Dobin at the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Jerusalem, 2 October 1945.

[39] CZA S25/5291, Daniel Gol of the Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan (Jerusalem) to Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Ouziel (Jerusalem), 5 July 1945.

[40] CZA S6/4659, Dobkin, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to Tartakower, World Jewish Congress (New York) on 25 Shevet 5706, 4 February 1946.

[41] In July 1946, all 42 Jews who returned to Kielce, Poland were murdered. See [Chief Rabbi] Jonathan Sacks, "The Hatred that won't die," *Guardian*, 28 February 2002, 19.

Eliahu Dobkin, an official of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem explained to Tartakower exactly *how* to speak to Afghan diplomats. He quoted from a letter written by the Jerusalem Va'ad that said one should never threaten or pressure Afghans, but rather speak softly to them as friends.[42] This would be the only effective strategy. Tartakower followed this advice, and counselled others to do similarly. This culturally appropriate strategy achieved extraordinary results, far faster than the Jewish leadership in Palestine and later Israel, could even regulate. It is unfortunate that Dobkin did not want the World Jewish Congress to intervene materially for the benefit of the Jews in Afghanistan. This author feels certain that some of their suffering would have been alleviated, thereby easing the tremendous pressure upon the Zionist offices in Bombay and Teheran as refugees streamed across the frontiers.

Refugee Crisis in India: A Precarious Medical and Legal Situation

In the late 1940s, Afghanistani Jews encountered a dramatic range of events, in the land of their birth as well as in Iran and India. The chronology is not altogether clear, as many occurances were simultaneous, and the information they transmitted to the outside world was sent to three different continents in at least as many languages. It is certain, however, that in 1945, the British Minister's actions towards the Jews in Afghanistan changed dramatically. This may have been due to the Holocaust, or the anti-Semitism he witnessed directly. Perhaps Sir Giles Squire's role as protector of Indian traders alerted him to ethnic prejudice in Afghanistan. In an unprecedented step, Squire granted travel facilities to 300 Jews on medical grounds. While it was true that Jews were denied access to the few hospitals in Afghanistan at this time, the consul's rationale was not about health care. He felt that if the Jews remained in Afghanistan, they would be in "danger of personal attack and serious persecution, albeit unofficial."[43]

[42] The original letter is found in CZA S6/4659, Daniel Gol of the Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan (Committee of the Afghanistan Jewish Community in Palestine) to the Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), on 11 Tevet 5706 (approximately January 1946).

[43] CZA C2/1659, Jewish Relief Association (Bombay) to Norman Bentwich (London), 29 March 1948.

A censored letter that survives in the Central Zionist Archives provides more detail as to the precise situation of the Jews in Afghanistan immediately following World War II. Captain M. Makin at the British Military Hospital in Colaba, Bombay, wrote that he was involved in Zionist work, but that unexpectedly, he had been thrust into assisting refugees. He said that several days previously, seventy Jews from Afghanistan had arrived in Bombay, but that several hundred more were rumoured to be on their way. Makin said that they left Afghanistan because of "Moslem fanaticism and fierce anti-Semitism there. Some of the women had had acid thrown on them, some men had been sent to prison for seven years for keeping wine for Kiddush, etc."[44] They had nowhere to stay, and so they slept in the compound of the Byculla Synagogue of Bombay, and begged for food.[45]

The last part of Makin's letter is the most interesting, as he describes the socio-medical condition of the refugees in relation to the needs of the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. He writes that they all want to go to Palestine, "but I must admit they are very poor material. Uneducated, diseased, without trade or occupation. The children are all scabetio, with septic sores and impetigo, and present a sorry picture." He writes that he was "given pretty well a free hand" in dealing with the refugees, and that he was now "engaged in medically vetting all the people there."[46]

No more letters appear from Makin in the files of the Central Zionist Archive, and so one must surmise what happened next. Perhaps Makin's recommendations made officials in the Yishuv cautious about the emigration of Jews from Afghanistan. They worried about the transmission of communicable diseases and their inability or unwillingness to treat them. These concerns were viewed as an unnecessary drain on precious resources. Indeed, several letters were written to Bombay by the Jewish

[44] CZA S6/4659, extract from a private letter intercepted and censored from Capt. M. Makin, R.A.M.C., British Military Hospital, Colaba, Bombay, India Command, to Walter Ettinghausen, dated 31 October 1945.

[45] A photograph of children from Afghanistan waiting for a meal in the Bombay synagogue is found in the: *Jewish Chronicle,* 25 July 1947, 17.

[46] CZA S6/4659, extract from a private letter from Capt. M. Makin, R.A.M.C., British Military Hospital, Colaba, Bombay, India Command, to Walter Ettinghausen, dated 31 October 1945.

Agency imploring the Zionist Association there to only send young and healthy people to Eretz Yisrael.[47]

It is important to note that Makin's letters were intercepted and censored by British authorities either in India or Palestine. Consequently, the detailed information about the poor level of public health among the refugees in India may have made them even more cautious in authorizing immigration. Among officials of the Yishuv, the precarious state of the refugees' health was widely known. When Sassoon Siman-Tov wrote about the health of Afghanistani Jews in Teheran in 1950, he claimed that "[t]he health situation of the Jews is generally satisfactory," and stressed that all were observing the dietary laws.[48] This suggests that Siman-Tov wanted to avoid further prejudice against the emigrants, as certainly they could not be fully healthy after enduring years of displacement, poverty, persecution, and famine.

Causes of Refugee Crisis

As Makin reported, Jews started to stream across Afghanistan's southeastern border after the close of World War II. Their numbers grew, for the reasons mentioned above, such as a military draft, arrest for previously legal activities, and the harassment of women.[49] Perhaps the Tel Aviv Va'ad explained the situation most poignantly when they wrote that these Jews in Afghanistan left, because they were:

> persecuted and have all kinds of libels against them, and because of true danger to their lives [*sakanat nefashot*], and they trembled. ... They sold their property quickly, almost for free, because they were ready to go to *Eretz Yisrael*. As they did not receive permission to make 'aliya, they stayed in India.[50]

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[47] CZA S6/5404, J.N. Behar, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to J. Gubbay, Bombay Zionist Association, 19 April 1948.

[48] CZA S6/6787, Report on the Situation of Afghan Jewry from Sassoon Siman-Tov, Jewish Agency, Department of Middle Eastern Jews (Teheran), 19 September 1950. As a young man, Siman-Tov was chosen to assist the refugees as his family came from Afghanistan and Mashhad

[49] CZA S6/5404, H. Gubbay, Afghan Jewish Relief Committee, Central Jewish Board of Bombay to Shabtain Rowson, Jewish Agency (London), 16 October 1947.

[50] CZA S25/5246, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan (Committee of Jewish Immigrants of Afghanistan in Tel Aviv and Jaffa) to Golda Myerson, Director of the Department of State, Jewish Agency (Tel Aviv), 27 January 1947.

By 1947, 280 Jews from Afghanistan lived in "semi-permanent hutments" in a compound at the Byculla Synagogue in Bombay. The *Palestine Post* reported that their conditions were "most appalling ... without proper shelter or means of livelihood. Many of the children died from infectious diseases."[51]

While not the main factor, the Jewish Agency certainly helped to precipitate an unplanned and premature emigration. As the evidence shows, it exacerbated a refugee crisis in India by providing inaccurate information to the Afghanistani Jewish community in Palestine who then transmitted it on to Afghanistan. Ultimately, the diplomatic initiatives taken to assist these unfortunates helped to change Afghanistan's attitude to its remaining Jewish population – yet this provided little comfort to those suffering in Bombay. In January 1947, after Jews in Peshawar were sent back to Afghanistan, the Tel Aviv Va'ad wrote to Golda Myerson (later Meir), the director of the Department of State of the Jewish Agency in Tel Aviv.

> About two years ago, we turned to the Office of Immigration of the Jewish Agency, and informed them of the suffering and persecution of our brothers, and they assured us that every Jew of Afghan [sic] who would come to India would have arrangements made to make 'aliya. So, we wrote to our brothers that they should make arrangements to come from Afghan [sic] to India, and by the time that our brothers arrived in India, we turned to all of the institutions, and to the Department of Immigration and we did not find one open ear.[52]

The Tel Aviv Va'ad was incensed that it had been misled into believing that Jews from Afghanistan who entered India would be allowed to immigrate to Israel immediately. As a result, they transmitted faulty information to Afghanistan, which may have led to the deaths of their community members on their return to Kabul. The Tel Aviv Va'ad appealed to the Jewish Agency not to discriminate against them. "We ask you to stand on our right side ... We are also Jews who have suffered from exile, and have drunk from the poisoned cup of anti-Semitism." The letter ends on a harsh note, with a

[51] CZA S5/11616, "The Jews of Afghanistan," *Palestine Post*, 17 February 1950.

[52] CZA S25/5246, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan (Committee of Jewish Immigrants of Afghanistan in Tel Aviv and Jaffa) to Golda Myerson, Director of the Department of State, Jewish Agency (Tel Aviv), 27 January 1947.

warning that was also a recrimination. "This is a matter of life and death, and you are leaving them a bitter fate if our request isn't fulfilled."[53] This letter had some effect, and when the next period of anxiety commenced for those residing in Bombay six months later, Golda Myerson (Meir) began to contact the British authorities in Palestine on their behalf.[54]

This was not the only occasion when misinformation was transmitted to desperate Jews in Afghanistan. In 1949, the leaders of the Kabuli community wrote to the Israeli ambassador in Moscow. They informed Mordechai Namir that Zvi Cynowicz of the Jewish Agency Office in Bombay had told them that if they could get to Bombay, he would send them on to Israel. However, the Afghan authorities did not give these community members passports and the Pakistanis would not grant transit, so they were stuck in India.[55] This also happened the following year in Iran, and Jews in Afghanistan only stopped arriving there after their landsmen warned them that there were no facilities to expedite their emigration from Iran.

Deportation from Peshawar

In January 1947, several groups of Jews living in Peshawar were deported to Afghanistan. The authorities in India alleged that they were overstaying their visas, even though Squire was supportive of their plight. This action considerably shifted the relations between the refugees in India and various Jewish organisations in Palestine, the United States and the United Kingdom. Suddenly, it became clear that the Government of India would expel Afghanistani Jews, and the voices of those in Bombay facing similar edicts rose in urgency.

In order to raise the alert, Daniel Gol sent a translated letter to the Jewish Agency and the Va'ad Leumi from Jews in Peshawar. It explained that they had contacted

[53] Ibid.

[54] CZA S25/5246, Goldie Myerson, Executive of the Jewish Agency to Fox-Strangeways (both in Jerusalem), 10 September 1947.

[55] Letter written to the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow from Jews in Afghanistan (unspecified as to the individuals or their residence) and sent on 6 February 1949, as reproduced by Reuven Kashani, "*'Aliyat Yehudei Afghanistan l'Eretz Yisrael,*" *Ba-Ma'arakha*, 233 (May 1980): 12-13, *op cit* Mordechai Namir, *Shlihot b'Moskva*, 349.

Nehru's secretary at the Indian National Congress, the Office of the Interior, the Peshawari regional government, and the secret police asking if the deportation could be postponed until after the harshest part of winter passed. This was refused, as was the next request to delay the expulsion by a week in order to gather food and the appropriate clothing. Faced with the choice of being dumped on the other side of the frontier, the community hired a lorry to transport thirty-six people, including the elderly, infirm, women and children. All had lived in Peshawar for at least three years. A second convoy returned to Afghanistan soon afterwards.[56] (The inclusion of women, and those on the edges of life's spectrum shows that Peshawar was not simply a male economic colony.) The unidentified author(s) in Peshawar asked Daniel Gol to "bring this matter before high institutions" as the Afghanistani Jewish refugees in Bombay (resident there for four to five years) were also being targeted for deportation. It was feared that the Jews of Afghanistan would be lost, as the British Consul in Kabul was not giving more exit visas to India for Jews. As in so many other cases, the letter ended with a supplication:

> Our cry must penetrate your hearts. There are no words to describe the amount of our suffering. Do all that you can, and maybe with the help of G-d and with your help, the hour of our redemption and salvation will arrive.[57]

International Jewish organisations were unable to assist the Peshawari community in time to avert their deportation. The community's proximity to the Afghan frontier made them simply too vulnerable.

Even the long-resident community in Peshawar was unable to survive the violence that accompanied Pakistani independence. Nearly a year after the expulsion of Afghanistani Jews in the city, the rest of the community, approximately forty families,

[56] CZA S25/5246, letter from Daniel Gol (Jerusalem) to the Jewish Agency and the Va'ad Leumi (Jerusalem) 12 Shevet 5707, transmitting a letter from Afghanistani Jews in Peshawar written on 15 January 1947.

[57] Ibid.

also had to flee.[58] In the beginning of December 1947, Muslims entered Jewish homes, and the ensuing violence left one Jewish woman, Mrs. Hananel Mirzaioff, murdered, with her husband and daughter seriously wounded.[59] By the time that the Pakistani High Commissioner's office in London explained to the World Jewish Congress that the "motive was quite obviously robbery" the entire Jewish community was assembled in Karachi, waiting to cross into India, having lost all of their possessions.[60] These Jewish residents of Peshawar joined those waiting for 'aliya in Bombay. This was a further blow to the Jewish community in Afghanistan as many of those in Peshawar came from Afghanistan, and these family members acted as a link to the outside world by relaying news and perhaps assisting financially.[61] On a much smaller scale, the experience of the Jewish community in Pakistan was similar to that of the Hindu community, as partition meant the end of their residence.

After the deportation from Peshawar, refugees' concerns in Bombay appear to have been taken more seriously by the Jewish Agency in Palestine. The next alarm bell rang in the summer of 1947. Abdur Rahman, Indian Delegate to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, wrote to the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, saying that the Jews from Afghanistan had to leave India by 30 September. He said that they came to India on "false pretenses" two years earlier and had been granted favourable treatment in this time. Abdur Rahman went on to say that visa extensions were only given for reasons more substantial than "vague allegations of fear of ill treatment," and that the government in Afghanistan had neither anti-Semitic policies nor legislation. Abdur Rahman did not feel that those dwelling in a Bombay synagogue's compound were authentic refugees and to show his contempt of that concept, he placed quotations

[58] CZA S25/5291, Telegram from Cynowicz, Central Jewish Board of Bombay to Myerson, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 7 December 1947.

[59] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/3. Telegrams from Bombay to London, 5 and 9 December 1947.

[60] CZA S25/5284, M. Ahmad, First Secretary, High Commissioner for Pakistan to L. Zelmanovits, Secretary General, World Jewish Congress (both in London), 17 December 1947; and CZA S6/4577 Yitzhak Ben-Zvi's notes of a meeting with Mr. Borukov, 15 January 1948. For a description of the Jewish community in Karachi, see Daniel Schonfeld, letter to the editor, *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 July 1947, 13.

[61] CZA S6/5404, Cynowicz (Bombay) to Behar (Jerusalem), 18 December 1947.

around the term "refugees."[62] This letter set off a flurry of activity.[63] The Jewish organisations grappling with this crisis became even more aware of the precarious state of the Jewish refugees in India.

Negotiating with British Authorities

British officials in Jerusalem felt that the claim of those in Bombay was not as urgent as that of displaced persons in Europe or those interned in Cyprus. They would not give immigration certificates to Afghanistani Jews as an alternative to the Jewish displaced persons in Europe. However, they were willing to give certificates to Afghanistani Jews which would normally been allocated to European refugees in Cypriot camps. The British stipulated that these exceptional circumstances must be explained clearly to the European Jews refused entry into Palestine and interned on the island.[64] Golda Myerson agreed with V. Fox-Strangeways, of the British Chief Secretary's Office in Jerusalem that the situation of Afghanistani Jews was not worse than those in European camps; however, she felt that there was "serious risk that their state may be considerably worsened" if they were sent back. It was only nine months later, after the condition of the Jewish refugees in Bombay became even more dire, and they were on the brink of deportation, that the Jewish Agency gave them more certificates.[65]

Initially Myerson wanted their certificates to come from the general quota rather than the one from Cyprus. This was refused. Then she asked for a smaller allocation of fifty certificates to convince the Indian authorities to postpone the scheduled mass

[62] CZA S25/5246, Abdur Rahman, Delegate of India, United Nations (Geneva) to Chief Rabbi Meir Hay Ouziel (Jerusalem), 29 July 1947 "on the subject of Jewish "refugees" from Afghanistan en route to Palestine now detained at Bombay."

[63] "Indian Threat to Jewish Refugees," *Jewish Chronicle*, 29 August 1947, 1.

[64] CZA S25/5246, V. Fox-Strangeways, Chief Secretary's Office, Government of Palestine to I. Ben-Zvi, President of the Va'ad Leumi (both in Jerusalem), 6 June 1947; and V. Fox-Strangeways, Chief Secretary's Office, Government of Palestine to Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), 4 September 1947.

[65] CZA S6/5404, H. Gubbay, the Jewish Board of Bombay to Shabtain Rowson, Jewish Agency for Palestine (London), 16 October 1947.

deportation.[66] In this matter, the British partially acquiesced, and sent twenty-five certificates. They did not promise any further certificates.[67]

British officials in Jerusalem echoed the Jewish Agency's sentiment that these twenty-five certificates might help reverse the Indian government's planned deportation. Interestingly, these authorities thought that Afghanistani Jews in Bombay were there illegally, as they were threatened with deportation.[68] However, the President of the Bombay Zionist Association informed the Jewish Agency in a post-script that he wished to state "emphatically" that Jewish refugees from Afghanistan were in Bombay *legally*, as they had been given six-month visas by the British Consul in Kabul which were periodically renewed in India. J.J. Gubbay, president of the Bombay Zionist Association asked that the Jewish Agency inform the Chief Secretary's Office of this oversight, as it might have the effect of increasing the number of visas granted. At the end of November 1947, twenty-five more certificates were made available for refugees in Bombay, as British officials in Palestine looked more favourably upon Jewish refugees in Bombay than British officials in England did.[69] Indeed, the High Commissioner of Palestine tried to help those in Bombay, but the Colonial Office vetoed his actions.

As the date of the pending deportation drew closer, the offices of the Yishuv turned to prominent American Jews for assistance.[70] Congressman Emanuel Celler of

[66] CZA S25/5246, Goldie Myerson, Executive of the Jewish Agency to Fox-Strangeways (both in Jerusalem), 10 September 1947.

[67] The British authorities in Palestine initially promised fifty certificates, however, the Immigration Department opposed this decision and so the Colonial Office halved the allocation. CZA S6/5404, H. Gubbay, the Jewish Board of Bombay to Shabtain Rowson, Jewish Agency for Palestine (London), 16 October 1947.

[68] CZA S25/5246, Executive of the Jewish Agency to Chief Secretary, Government of Palestine (both in Jerusalem), 8 October 1947; and CZA S6/5404, G.G. Grimwood, Chief Secretary's Office, Government of Palestine to the Executive of the Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), 26 September 1947.

[69] CZA S6/5404, J.J.Gubbay, President, Bombay Zionist Association to J.N. Behar, Secretary, Immigration Department, Jewish Agency for Palestine (Jerusalem), 16 October 1947; and J.J. Gubbay, to J.N. Behar, 27 November 1947.

[70] For instance, the Afghan Jewish Relief Committee in Bombay also knew that they could rely on the assistance of Jewish organisations and leadership in other nations. "We are telling our friends all over the world not to relax their efforts and to do all in their power to secure visas for these hapless people." CZA S6/5404, H. Gubbay, the Jewish Board of Bombay to Shabtain Rowson, Jewish Agency for Palestine, London, 16 October 1947.

New York City cabled the new Prime Minister of India, Jawarharlal Nehru, and asked if the 280 Jews mostly living in Bombay could stay a short time longer until they could reach Palestine. He hoped that India would "act in [the] true spirit of humanity" by giving this small pocket of refugees some more time. Nehru agreed, and the new departure date was set for 31 December 1947.[71] However, this date would not be extended further, and it was shifted partially due to the difficulties of transportation in Northern India because of the enormous upheaval that ensued after partition.[72]

Conflict between the Jewish Agency and Afghanistani Va'adot in Eretz Yisrael

After the immediate crisis was averted for several more months, arguments between the Jewish Agency and those representing Afghanistani Jewry commenced. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, President of the Va'ad Leumi asked the Jewish Agency to ask the British for 250 more certificates for refugees in Bombay. He said that the Indian government had already been approached several times, but that this was the last time they would extend the deadline. Ben-Zvi warned that there were only two more months before the refugees' visas expired, and encouraged the Jewish Agency to act immediately. The position of the Jewish Agency did not change dramatically.

The Jewish Agency wanted young people who were healthy, could perform hard physical labour, and had relatives in Palestine to take care of their material needs. They stated: "Under no circumstances should certificates be allotted to persons who do not comply with our health regulations. The candidates should pass a thorough medical examination, and only such persons who are healthy in mind and in spirit can be considered as nominees under these certificates."[73] While these parameters were not binding for their representatives' choices in India, it was still very important that the people chosen had private means of assistance. This decision proved too difficult for

[71] CZA S25/5246, Copy of Emanuel Celler's telegram to Jawarharlal Nehru, 2 September 1947; and I.S. Chopra, Secretary at the Embassy of India (Washington, D.C.) to Emanuel Celler, 28 October 1947.

[72] CZA S6/5404, H. Gubbay, the Jewish Board of Bombay to Shabtain Rowson, Jewish Agency for Palestine (London), 16 October 1947.

[73] CZA S6/5404, J.N. Behar, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to J. Gubbay, Bombay Zionist Association, 19 April 1948.

the Bombay Zionist Association. Later, the Jewish Agency complained that Bombay sent unfit immigrants, and some who had contagious diseases.[74] However, in 1947, the Palestine Office in Bombay simply wrote that it did not possess a means to choose fairly, other than "'First in - First out.'"[75] J.J. Gubbay wrote that all 300 refugees claimed the twenty-five certificates for themselves. They felt "bitter disappointment" after waiting for two years, and were also distraught at the prospect of returning "to the hell from which they thought they escaped." Gubbay explained that his offices were being treated something like the Western Wall, where groups of ten to twenty refugees would visit throughout the day, each clasping telegrams from their relatives in Eretz Yisrael.[76]

Further problems were caused by the restrictions of the Afghan Consul in Bombay. In October, he refused to break up multi-generational family passports, and recommended that anyone who wanted to divide the family passport should return to Afghanistan.[77] One month later, when the first twenty-five certificates for emigration to Palestine were distributed, the Afghan consul refused to renew their passports or include Palestine in the countries they were allowed to visit. This was very much like the actions of Afghan diplomats in Europe in the 1930s. The Bombay Zionist Association was upset by these actions, and hoped to be able to obtain visas from the Indian government without the "formalities" of the Afghan Consul's participation.[78]

Severe monetary constraints facing the Jewish Agency were another factor delaying 'aliya. It was very concerned about the financial costs of immigration, and sought to do whatever possible to limit these expenses. Officials asked if emigrants from Afghanistan could pay for their flights and traveling expenses. This appears to have been a highly unusual request that caused a great deal of anger, as other groups did not pay for their airfare. The Jewish Agency also wanted to know the names of

[74] Ibid, 2 October 1947.

[75] CZA S6/5404, H. Cynowicz (Bombay) to J. Behar, Secretary of the Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 18 Decmeber 1947.

[76] CZA S6/5404, J.J. Gubbay, President of Bombay Zionist Association to J.N. Behar, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 16 October 1947.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid, 7 November 1947.

relatives in Eretz Yisrael, so that it could approach and encourage them to support the newcomers' absorption process.[79] This theme also appears in the early 1950s, when the head of the immigration department, Yitzhak Rafael, also pressured the Afghanistani Va'ads by saying that they would have to cover all of the expenses of absorbing the new immigrants.

Only three days before the refugees in Bombay were scheduled to be deported, Golda Myerson cabled the Jewish Agency in Washington D.C. and asked if Emanuel Celler and "other friends" could contact Jawarharlal Nehru.[80] At the last minute, the congressman was once again cabling India's Prime Minister regarding the plight of the refugees in Bombay. Nehru agreed that they would be able to stay four more months, until 30 April, but that this extension would be "absolutely final."[81] After this point, the Government of Palestine reiterated the official British position, that extra certificates would not be granted to the refugees in Bombay, but that their entry into Palestine would mean that they were taking places allotted to refugees in Cyprus. The British reasoned that if the Jewish Agency felt that the plight of the refugees in Bombay was truly grave, their certificates should come from the Cyprus allocation.[82]

Soon Zvi Cynowicz of the Palestine Office in Bombay and Bombay Zionist Association began to argue for this very solution. He wrote that: "the question of Afghan Jews in India should be given priority even over those who are stranded in Cyprus and other displaced persons camps as their situation is self explanatory."[83] By the end of March, the Immigration Department at the Jewish Agency finally concurred. However, the Chief Secretary's office insisted that the inmates of the camps had to be

[79] CZA S6/5404, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan (Tel Aviv) to the Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 28 November 1947. "It costs more than 80 pounds per person for the flight, and we don't have that money. They have large families with many children, and can't take any of their belongings. You need to find a way for them to get out;" and J. Behar, Secretary of the Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to [J.J.] Gubbay, Zionist Association (Bombay), 2 October 1947.

[80] CZA S25/5284, Myerson (Jerusalem) to Epstein (Washington), 28 December 1947.

[81] CZA S25/5246, Epstein (Washington) to Myerson, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 19 January 1948.

[82] CZA S6/5404, V. Fox-Strangeways, Chief Secretary's Office to Rabbi Nathan, Va'ad Leumi (both in Jerusalem), 27 February 1948.

[83] CZA S6/5404, H. Cynowicz, Palestine Office for India (Bombay) to Charles Barlas, Director of the Immigration Department (Jerusalem), 2 March 1948.

in agreement with this proposal.[84] One week later, the Central Committee of the Jewish Refugees Camps in Cyprus sent a letter to the Jewish Agency. Its members viewed "with apprehension and deep compassion the fate of their unhappy brethren ... who are in immediate danger of being expelled and sent back to Afghanistan where implacable death awaits them, and decide unanimously to forego in their favour one hundred Immigration Certificates" of the April 1948 quota.[85] Thus, 150 certificates in total were procured for the refugees, which encompassed roughly half of those languishing in Bombay. The Jewish Agency hoped that this would cause the suspension of the deportation order.[86] Indeed, it appears to have done so, as the Indian government allowed Jews from Afghanistan to stay in Bombay until 31 July 1948, provided that arrangements for their 'aliya were made.[87] The logistical difficulties of finding a way to Israel continued. Though, deportation was far less feasible, as India no longer shared a border with Afghanistan. Despite the concession granted by Indian authorities allowing the Jews to stay, with the outbreak of war in May 1948, transportation from India to Israel ceased and by August, the Jerusalem Va'ad reported that only seventy-five had been able to emigrate.[88] Nonetheless, a few hundred Jews dwelling quietly in a synagogue courtyard would have been very low on the list of priorities for the Indian government at this time. It was grappling with terrible crises, violence and the largest population transfer the world had ever witnessed. By the end of June 1949, over half of the Jews waiting in Bombay were able to arrive in Israel. Three hundred and eight individuals were flown via Aden, where Yemenis joined their flight. In a strange historical twist, Afghanistani Jews became part of the famous journey known as

[84] CZA S6/5404, G.G.Grimwood, Chief Secretary's Office, Government of Palestine to J. Behar, Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem) 24 March 1948.

[85] CZA S6/5404, Letter from the Chairmen of the Xylotymbon and Caraolus Camps in Cyprus, 31 March 1948. Jews interned in Cyprus were allocated 750 certificates a month.

[86] CZA S6/5404, J.N. Behar, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to J. Gubbay Bombay Zionist Association, 19 April 1948.

[87] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/3, V.K. Krishne Menon, High Commission for India to the Secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews (both in London), 1 June 1948 and D. Mowshowitch (London) to Jewish Relief Association (Bombay), 4 June 1948.

[88] CZA S6/5404, Daniel Gol, Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan to the Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), 26 August 1948.

Operation Magic Carpet, when approximately 50,000 Yemeni Jews were airlifted to Israel.[89]

Legal Emigration from Afghanistan: The Role of Jewish Organisations

The decriminalization of Jewish emigration from Afghanistan occurred as a result of assisting refugees in Bombay. The role of the World Jewish Congress in delaying deportation from India also facilitated the departure of Jews from Afghanistan. The Central Zionist Archives have documents which show that in September 1949, the Israel Executive of the World Jewish Congress met with two Jews from Afghanistan, Avraham Jasdi and Agedjan.[90] Jasdi informed those assembled that the situation of the Jewish community in Afghanistan had not improved in the post-war years. Arieh Tartokower, a representative from New York, was also present. He felt that the Afghan government should be contacted initially via the American State Department, and induced to grant exit visas to members of the Jewish community. Tartokower argued that this was the most important step, and that "some Jewish personality who is an American citizen" could travel to Afghanistan or Iran. He volunteered for this task, but it is not known if the journey occurred.[91] It is more likely that the second American ambassador to Afghanistan (1949-1951), Louis Dreyfus managed this task on his own.[92]

By the end of October 1949, Jerusalem received word that the Afghan government had issued passports for a "certain number" of Jews for the first time since the early 1930s. The Indian government also granted transit visas to these same, most likely wealthy, individuals.[93] This decision represented a radical departure from previous policies. However, it was limited in scope. One month later, an Israeli representative in Teheran, Zion Cohen, informed immigration authorities in Tel Aviv

[89] Landshut 1950a, 69.

[90] Perhaps M.H. Aqajan of the Va'ad Hitahadut Olei Afghanistan in Tel Aviv, though no other names are specified. Jasdi may be an alternate spelling of Yazdi, therefore indicating his family's origins.

[91] CZA Z6/244. Minutes of Meeting of the Delegation of Afghanistan Jews, 28 September 1949.

[92] Adamec 1974, 276.

[93] CZA Z6/244. Minutes of the Israeli Executive Meeting, 30 October 1949.

that he was working with Afghan authorities to grant passports to all Jews who requested them. Cohen coordinated with American officials in Iran, and had asked Louis Dreyfus to help in this effort as well. Cohen built the foundation for a mass migration, as he worked with Iranians, and targeted Afghan officials. By the end of November 1949, Cohen managed to procure transit visas for Herati Jews who wished to immigrate to Israel. His actions on their behalf do not seem to have been founded in a full understanding of the plight of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. Cohen wrote to the Department of Immigration, and said that they were suffering persecution, were very poor, and could not pay for their journey.[94]

The process of coordinating 'aliya was often disorganized. Even the efforts of Zion Cohen appear to have been unknown to Jewish representatives in Bombay. In February 1950, Zvi Cynowicz of the Bombay Zionist Association wrote to the Political Department of the World Jewish Congress in New York, and said that the Afghan ambassadors in Washington, London, Paris, and New Delhi should be contacted simultaneously to allow the Jews to leave freely with their property intact. The following weeks brought higher-level discussions. Robert Marcus, Political Director of the World Jewish Congress wrote to Muhammad Naim Khan, Afghan ambassador to the United States, and asked if they would abolish the prohibition against Jewish emigration.[95] The Israeli Mission to the United Nations also contacted the Jewish Agency to see if the time was right to pressure the Afghan delegation to allow a Jewish departure. The Director of the Immigration Department, Yitzhak Rafael concurred, and hoped that their 'aliya could commence in May with small groups leaving at a time.[96] The Israeli Foreign Ministry advised its UN delegation to negotiate cautiously and informally, following the same course of action that the Jerusalem Va'ad had recommended four years previously. The delegation was told that a formal declaration was not necessary, as the Jewish Agency did not have an office in Afghanistan. Rather,

[94] CZA S6/6787, Zion Cohen (Teheran) to Mosad l'Aliya - Immigration Department (literally: institution) (Tel Aviv), summary of several letters, most notably those of 24 and 26 November 1949.

[95] CZA C2/1659, H. Cynowicz, Bombay Zionist Association to World Jewish Congress, Political Department (New York), 1 February 1950. He volunteered to meet with the Afghan ambassador in New Delhi; and Marcus (New York) to Sardar Muhammad Naim (Washington, D.C.), 10 February 1950.

[96] CZA Z6/327, Goldman (New York) to Y. Rafael (Jerusalem), 21 February 1950 and CZA S6/6787, Y. Rafael (Paris) to Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 26 February 1950.

friendly meetings without official authorization should occur as the Israeli Foreign Ministry felt that unofficial channels would obtain the best results.[97]

On 25 February 1950, Cynowicz had a meeting with the Afghan ambassador in New Delhi. For this discussion, he negotiated under the aegis of the World Jewish Congress, without reference to his position as the head of Bombay's Zionist Association.[98] The notes he sent to the offices of the World Jewish Congress in New York provide insight into the rationale behind political decisions that the Afghan government took regarding its Jewish population. This encounter led to a series of surprising revelations that had positive consequences for the Jewish community. The Afghan ambassador said that his government treated all citizens equally, and that Jews did not face discrimination. If there had been discrimination in the past, it was only directed towards Bukharan Jews. The ambassador referred to recent World Jewish Congress press reports that "burst anti-Afghanistan elements." Cynowicz was surprised as the Afghan ambassador attributed these statements to the hostility of the Pakistani government. The ambassador was convinced that Pakistan was behind negative reports about Afghanistan. This is highly significant and demonstrates one reason why Afghanistan may have opened the doors of emigration for the Jewish community: its leaders did not wish to be maligned by Pakistan.

According to Cynowicz, the ambassador was aware that Jews wanted to immigrate to Israel, but stated that Afghanistan was still "hesitating to facilitate such a movement as [the Afghan government was] bound by religious ties and gentleman's agreement with the Arab States not to encourage and promote mass immigration of Jews to Israel." He continued by saying that his government was cognizant of the creation of a Jewish State, and expressed the hope that the political situation in the Middle East would improve, and relations could be established between Israel and the Arab world. This would then lead to a change in the Afghan government's attitude "in

[97] CZA S6/6787, Foreign Ministry (Ha-Kirah, Israel) to Gideon Rafael, Israeli mission to the UN (New York), 12 December 1950; and CZA S6/4659, Daniel Gol, Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan (Jerusalem) to Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 1 Tevet 5706 (approximately January 1946).

[98] CZA S6/6787, Y. Shimoni, Asia Department, Foreign Ministry (Ha-Kirya) to A. Nadad, Weinstein, and M. Cherbinsky, 19 June 1950.

regard to all aspects of the Jewish problem." The discussion turned to the provision of travelling documents if the Afghan authorities were to allow emigration. Cynowicz was very pleased with this meeting, which he believed (wrongly) was the first ever given to a Jewish organisation by a high representative of the Afghan government.[99]

In the course of his meeting with the Afghan Ambassador, Cynowicz commented that Turkey, Iran, and even Yemen had recently allowed Jewish emigration. Indeed, Turkey was the first Muslim state to establish diplomatic ties with Israel. Iran's relationship was more informal, though still friendly.[100] Jews fared the worst in independent Arab countries, particularly Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.[101] One example of the fear and suffering that Jews in the Muslim world experienced after Israel was declared is encapsulated in a tiny aerogram sent to the Chief Rabbi in London and found in the archives of the Board of Deputies. It described a "pogrom [that] took place in Cairo." The anonymous author then continued: "Over 500 jews [sic] were killed, mutilated, wounded & missing. Shops were burned & looted. Nothing of this was published in the local news papers. ... Could anything be done before it will be too late? Please."[102] Elie Eliachar, the head of the Sephardi Community in Israel summarized the situation from Morocco to Pakistan:

> The Aden Community was destroyed and the great majority of survivors are now destitute; the small Bahrein community was ransacked; the Damascus and Aleppo (Syria) communities are living under duress after their property, including 15 synagogues in Aleppo were burned to cinders. In Egypt, which is by far the most advanced and 'democratic' Arab independent state, a large number of leading Jews were imprisoned and their property 'sequestrated.' ... The massacres in Tripolitania and those

[99] All references to this meeting come from CZA C2/1659, H. Cynowicz, Bombay Zionist Association to Robert Marcus, World Jewish Congress (New York), 7 March 1950. While Cynowicz' meeting may have been the first on the sub-contintent, it certainly was not true in London where Jewish representatives met with members of the Mosahiban clan in the early 1930s.

[100] Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy, A Personal Memoir* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 78.

[101] BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/31, Notes from Foreign Affairs Committee, consultation on position of Jews in Moslem countries, 2 February 1948.

[102] BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/31, Notes from Foreign Affairs Committee, consultation on position of Jews in Moslem countries, 2 February 1948. Aerogram sent to Rabbi I. Brodie, Chief Rabbi, London, from Cairo (approximately summer 1948). See also Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews of Modern Egypt, 1914-1952* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989).

> of Morocco, conditions in Afghanistan, and events in Karachi, give us the feeling that a catastrophe is imminent for all our brethren residing in Arab countries unless something is done in time to prevent it.[103]

In Yemen, Imam Ahmad may have allowed the Jews under his sovereignty to leave for reasons similar to those of the Afghan government. His precise rationale is not known, though those involved in 'Operation Magic Carpet' hypothesised that he was angry at Iraq, whose agents killed his father. Also, he may have wanted to spur other members of the Arab League, and show his independence.[104] For its part, Afghanistan may have found more reassurance in joining the non-aligned movement championed by India and Iran, after the British Empire crumbled. Some branches of the Jewish Agency helped to facilitate the departure of the Jews from Afghanistan, especially Sassoon Siman-Tov in the Teheran office. Siman-Tov was well equipped to assist emigration from Afghanistan as he was from Mashhad and therefore knowledgeable about the region and its particularities. Other branches of the Jewish Agency were less helpful, and even disseminated inaccurate information that furthered the suffering of those refugees waiting in India and Iran. The efficacy of Jewish organisations was mixed. While ultimately successful, there was a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding in the late 1940s.

Afghan Rationale for Legal Emigration: Gaining Support for Pashtunistan

When Afghanistan sought to distance itself from the policies of the Muslim world, the door to Israel opened for the Jews of Afghanistan.[105] What follows is an explanation of why Afghanistan's policy shifted to allow legal emigration.

One of the principal factors for allowing emigration had less to do with the Jews and far more to do with Afghanistan's strong support and lobbying on behalf of the idea of Pashtunistan, or an independent territory for members of the Pashtun ethnic group

[103] BoD ACC/3121/C11/13/31, Elie Eliachar, President of Sephardi Community in Jerusalem to Edward Warburg, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Joint Distribution Committee (both in New York), 13 July 1948.

[104] Shlomo Barer, *The Magic Carpet* (Lonodn: Secker and Warburg, 1952), 178-9.

[105] CZA S6/6787, F.W. Pollack (Bombay) to Y. Shimoni (Ha-Kirya), 12 June 1950.

living in India. This cause gained currency in the 1920s, when the British established the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). A political party named *Afghan Jirga* merged with the local branch of the Indian National Congress party in 1931 to become *Khuda-yi Khidmatgar,* dominating the political life of the NWFP for the next sixteen years. In 1947, at the time when the vote for partition occurred, the party's leaders realised that there was little support among the people for joining India. Instead, they advocated an independent Pashtunistan. However, neither independence, nor joining Afghanistan was made an option on the ballot. *Khuda-yi Khidmatgar* called for a boycott of the plebiscite in July, and less than half of the population, possibly as little as ten percent, cast a ballot.[106] Nonetheless, those voting overwhelmingly chose to join Pakistan. Afghanistan continued to demand an independent territory.[107]

Afghanistan's animosity towards Pakistan grew, based on irredentist hostility over territory taken by Indian rulers in the eighteenth-century.[108] In 1960, an official publication of 1960 meant to gather support for the creation of Pashtunistan, the Afghan government stated that: "Any claims made by Pakistan on Pakhtunistan [an alternate spelling], as heir or successor to the British Indian Empire, is ... void and invalid. Britain did conquer and occupy parts of Pakhtunistan, but she was never in possession of the country as a whole."[109] Clearly, the ramifications of this 'Frontier Question' considerably embroiled Afghanistan's foreign policy. In September 1947, the Afghan delegation cast the only vote against Pakistan's admittance to the United Nations.[110] The tension was such that the British Ministry of Defence thought that there could be war between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and diplomatic relations between the two countries was cut in 1955 and 1961.[111]

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[106] Rahman Pazhwak, *Pakhtunistan: A New State in Central Asia* (London: Royal Afghan Embassy, 1960), 24.

[107] C.E. Bosworth et al, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), s.v. "Pashtunistan" by Malcom E. Yapp. Afghanistan even "encouraged the emergence of a phantom national assembly" with the Faqir of Ipi presiding.

[108] Adamec 1974, 261.

[109] Pazhwak, 25.

[110] Adamec 1974, 264.

[111] "Pakistan cannot establish her dominion in Pakhtunistan and hold the people in bondage. If her denial of the legitimate right of the people of Pakhtunistan is continued, the inevitable consequences will be a responsibility resting on her shoulders alone." (Pazhwak, 27) See IOL L/WS/1/1169, 89-105.

Anger over Pashtunistan may have made the Afghan government more amenable to foreign opinion. As already described, the Afghan ambassador to India clearly felt that the charge of anti-Semitism was a Pakistani plot to discredit Afghanistan. In the ambassador's eyes, this was an issue of conspiracy. He felt that the Pakistanis showed they were against Afghanistan by accusing them of anti-Semitism in the Jewish world.[112] While quite a bizarre notion, this delusion may have been helpful for the Jewish community, as they gained another ally by default. The ambassador's outburst demonstrates that he may have lobbied in favour of treating the Jewish community well, and letting them leave if they so chose, as a way of subverting alleged Pakistani propaganda.[113]

As a corollary to hostility towards Pakistan, Afghanistan became friendly with India, and more open to its influence. The editor of a Jewish magazine in Bombay learned that Afghanistan wanted to coordinate its foreign policy with Iran and India. As a result, he tried to convince an official of the Home Department in New Delhi to pursuade Afghanistan to allow its Jewish population to leave.[114] India managed previous waves of Jewish refugees from Afghanistan, and wanted this occurrence to end. Legal departure from Afghanistan could be directed towards Iran, though illegal departures (at least before partition) tended to go via Peshawar and ultimately to Bombay. India may have also wanted to encourage Afghans to show tolerance to the other remaining religious minorities in Afghanistan - Hindus and Sikhs.

In addition to conflict with Pakistan, the political leadership of Afghanistan changed. Several key Afghan leaders stepped down. Muhammad Hashim Khan and

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Possibility of War between Pakistan and Afghanistan: Draft Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 8 July 1949. C.E. Bosworth et al, eds. *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), s.v. "Pashtunistan" by Malcom E. Yapp.

[112] CZA C2/1659, Cynowicz (Bombay) to Marcus (New York), 7 March 1950.

[113] "Transit visas have been refused, it is because of the general bad feeling between Pakistan and Afghanistan." Instead, Pakistan asked that the Jews proceed to Teheran instead of Karachi. CZA C2/1659, A.L. Easterman (London) to M.L. Perlzweig (New York), 23 February 1950.

[114] CZA S6/6787, F.W. Pollack (Bombay) to Y. Shimoni, Director of Asian Division, Foreign Office (Ha-Kirya), 12 June 1950.

'Abd al-Majid Khan, architects of the economic system with clear anti-Semitic overtones, left office. In May 1946, Muhammad Hashim Khan resigned as regent in favour of his nephew, Muhammad Zahir Shah, and two years later, 'Abd al-Majid Khan Zabuli went to America (ostensibly for medical care), taking a considerable fortune made under the auspices of the Ashami Company.[115] Another reason that the leaders of Afghanistan allowed the Jews to leave may have been simply because they were pleased to have an impoverished, non-Muslim community depart.[116]

After the retirement of his regent, Muhammad Zahir Shah began to rule in his own name. He was more amenable to international pressure, while Afghan foreign policy became independent from Great Britain's influence. When Afghanistan was applying for membership to the United Nations in 1946, the American ambassador, Ely Palmer, asked if Jews there were persecuted. An undersecretary in the Foreign Ministry replied that they were allowed to practice Judaism openly, and that they did so with much clamour.[117] On other occasions, Afghan representatives stated that the Jewish community was free from persecution. Regardless of the veracity of this statement, the fact that they had to answer such questions meant governmental representatives became aware of the importance of this issue for the United States. After admittance to the UN, Afghanistan was more exposed to international currents and organisations. Later, this opened a window for Israeli diplomacy and the representations of the World Jewish Congress.

The king of Afghanistan also may have allowed Jews to leave due because of his own positive feelings towards them. There are many stories current among immigrants in Israel about his protection and generosity towards the community in Afghanistan. It is clear that they maintain great affection for him. A newspaper article written in 1980 reported that one of the few possessions an immigrant family kept from Afghanistan

[115] IOL L/PS/12/1562, *Leading Personalities of Afghanistan* 1948, 3; and Adamec 1974, 274.

[116] Regarding Jewish refugees in Bombay, the Jewish Agency reported that, "Afghanistan is not keen on having them back." CZA S6/6787, A.Gance, Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Bombay) to Y. Vainstein, Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 17 April 1951.

[117] Landshut 1950a, 69.

was a coloured lithograph of Muhammad Zahir Shah.[118] One informant told this author that at a state dinner, the king publicly chastised a relative for displaying anti-Semitism, reminding him of the belief that the Pashtuns were once Jews. This businessman, Eliahu Bezalel also confirmed the story of a German Jewish eye doctor who treated the king. In gratitude, Muhammad Zahir Shah asked what he wanted as a reward. The man asked for no payment, only that the king should treat his Jewish citizens well.[119]

Prejudice against the Jewish Community Lessened through Afghan Myth of Ethnogenesis

Anti-Semitism was sometimes mitigated by Afghan folk beliefs and origin myths. In the period of this study, this was of particular assistance when Jews were in the process of leaving Afghanistan. Some Pashtun tribes, especially the Durrani, Yussufzai, and Afridi, trace their descent to King Saul. In an article about the medieval Jewish community of Afghanistan, Guy Matalon notes that both Pashtuns and local Jews traced their ancestry to ancient Israelite tribes. This may have created an unusual set of complementary cultural identities. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British found these traditions intriguing.[120] Henri Vansittart took parts of the *Al Asrar al Afghan* written by Khair ad-Din and translated it in an attempt to learn about the origins of the Pashtun tribe. He states: "They are very proud of their ancient origin and the fame of their tribe, but other Muslims absolutely reject their pretentious pride." Due to this hostility, sometimes these folk beliefs were downplayed.[121] In the late 1930s, Nazi influence shifted the ethnogenesis beliefs of the Afghans. Louis Dupree

[118] Rafael Gaon, "*Beit Abba-Ima b'Afghanistan*," (Dad and Mom's Home in Afghanistan) *Al Ha-Mishmar,* 1 February 1980, 4.

[119] Interview with Eliahu Bezalel, Ramat Gan, Israel, 12 July 2001. Perhaps the physician arrived through negotiations carred out with Faiz Muhammad Khan in Ankara. While it is true that German Jewish physicians were practicing in Afghanistan at this time, this account could also be an urban legend. Caitlin Adams brought to my attention the biblical texture of this narative, and how similar it is to the Book of Esther.

[120] Guy Matalon, "The 'Other' in 'Afghan' Identity: Medieval Jewish community of Afghanistan" originally published in *Mardom Nama-e Bakhter* also found on line at: www.afghan-web.com/history/articles/jews.html. *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1925), s.v. "Afghanistan;" and *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), s.v. "Afghanistan."

[121] Henri Vansittart, *Sur l'Origine Hebraique des Afghans*, extract from Tome II, (Calcutta: 3 March 1784), 121and 123.

writes that: "many Afghans sought their origin in the legend of the lost, wandering tribe of the ancient Beni Israel," until German propagandists "injected a new bit of racist folklore into the Afghan mainstream" and told the Afghans that they were "the original Aryans."[122] Older folk beliefs partially resurfaced after Nazi Germany's defeat.[123]

Whatever the origins of this myth of ethnogenesis (or its accuracy), there can be no doubt that these beliefs provided links between the two groups, and could lead to some relief for the beleaguered Jewish community.[124] For example, Musa Morduf and Moshe Cohen Ambulo, two immigrants from Afghanistan living in Israel reported that when community members presented the Kabuli chief of police with a token of their thanks for his protection, he said that Afghans: "were of the Sons of Israel. When Muhamed came they had no other religion besides Judaism. You remained Jews and we accepted the religion of Muhamed."[125] Michael Bar Yosef was a Bukharan refugee living in Kabul during 1948, and along with most of the resident Jewish population, he wanted to emigrate. This was difficult because the Afghan Government "did not give Jews exit visas easily, especially during the days of [the] battle of the War of Independence, when it was considered reinforcements for the Jews." One day during the summer of 1948, Moshe Bar Yosef was sitting in a Muslim coffee house when three Afghan officers started a conversation with him. One of them said:

[122] Dupree 1973, 479.

[123] One visitor to Kabul in 2000 asked younger members of the Taliban if they knew about the Pashtuns' alleged Jewish roots. They had "never heard of such things and reproached me for asking a ridiculous question." However, frequently, "their elders intervened and put them right. 'Yes, a long time ago our people were Jewish,' they said." Michael Rubin, "Tea (and Prejudice) with the Taliban," *Jerusalem Report,* 19 June 2000, 37.

[124] See, for example, Shalva Weil, "Our Brethren the Taliban?" *Jerusalem Report,* 22 October 2001, 22.

[125] A. Avihail and A. Brin, *The Lost Tribes in Assyria.* (Jerusalem: Amishav, 1985), 76-7. This book was pubished by an organisation, Amishav, which is dedicated to finding and learning about the dispersed of Israel. The aim of this book is to show that Pashtuns are a lost tribe of Israel. As a by-product of this research, many Jews from Afghanistan were interviewed, including some also interviewed or studied by the present author. Clearly, this text must be used with caution, however some individuals expressed sentiments and recounted events that can be confirmed in other sources.

> I always thought the Jews were cowards and the Arabs brave like us, and now I [am] surprised to hear the opposite. How do your Jews win?" At first I hesitated and thought whether to answer them but all at once I became brave and said: "your opinion of the Arabs that they are brave is incorrect, they were never brave like you. They are cowards. Only the Muslim religion is common to you. But you are not of Arab stock, for you are of Jewish stock, and you received the religion at a later date." Hearing my answer two of the officers got very angry, but the third one quieted them saying – why do you boil up? This Jew speaks the truth. I myself heard from my father, that we are Afghans descended from the tribes of Israel. And then the officer beside him said – if we are truly of Jewish stock, the Jews are our relations and brothers and we should help them against the Arabs. These same officers helped me later to get papers for my immigration.[126]

While it was quite a risky strategy, Bar Yosef was able to use Afghan origin myths effectively to his great benefit. These beliefs were also current among the highest echelons of government and probably included the king himself.

Muhammad Zahir Shah may have seen the Jews as ancient kinsmen and therefore took special measures to protect them during times of unrest. He sent in the army to shield the Jewish communities in Herat and Kabul during Arab-Israeli wars, especially in 1956 and 1967. The government posted guards at the synagogues, and made everyone stay at home until the danger had passed. After some time had passed, men would go to the synagogue to pray and later they would open their businesses for a few hours each day. Only after the situation was sufficiently calm would women and children venture outside of the home. Despite these fears and precautions, it is clear that those who remained in Afghanistan during Muhammad Zahir Shah's post-war rule experienced far better conditions than at any other time -- except perhaps during Amanullah's reign. Remembering those years, Leah Dil told this author that the Jews were treated specially at the royal gardens in Paghman. When Muhammad Zahir Shah wanted to visit the gardens, ordinary citizens would have to leave, but the Jews were permitted to stay. As the king strolled through the gardens, he would ask, who are those people over there? When told that they were Jews, they were allowed to remain. He would go over and greet those picnicking, and ask after them. Leah Dil recalled

[126] Ibid, 58-9.

that Muhammad Zahir Shah would ask the schoolboys if they were having any trouble, or being bullied. If an incident occurred, the children were to report it to him.[127] Dil remembers greeting the king on many occasions in Paghman. She would also help to make elaborate trays of sweets for the royal family on the occasions of their children's marriages. Dil mentioned that Muhammad Zahir Shah told them, "As long as I am king, you will be protected."[128]

An even greater influence upon Afghanistan must have been its desire to cultivate friendship with the United States. As early as 1921, Afghanistan turned to the United States as an alternative to Germany, to fill the role of a territorially disinterested third power. However, Afghanistan's overtures were consistently turned down for two decades. When asked to establish a diplomatic mission in 1930 and 1935, the US refused. It viewed Afghanistan as part of the British sphere of influence, having a similar role to its own in Latin America, and consequently wary of treading on British interests. In 1937, Afghanistan even offered a lucrative concession for oil exploration to an American firm with the hope that this would stimulate involvement, and a US diplomatic mission would be established. Only one year later, the Inland Oil Exploration Company abandoned its concession, citing the "worsening international situation." However, in July 1942 an American legation was established in Kabul, after Germany's attack through the Caucasus, "endangered Allied communications across Iran" but left Afghanistan unfettered.[129] After the war, in the absence of Germany, and with strategic advantages now clear to both sides, relations between the US and Afghanistan warmed.

America never expressed territorial ambition in Central Asia, and after the Holocaust, it often appealed to countries to protect their Jewish communities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the United States sold 100,000 tons of flour to Afghanistan in 1947 to alleviate widespread hunger. Most of Afghanistan's imports in

[127] Interview with Leah Dil, Holon, Israel, 9 July 2001.

[128] Ibid. After Muhammad Zahir Shah was overthrown in 1973, Leah and her husband Levi Dil applied for, and received special medical permission to leave Afghanistan. They felt that the situation would not be stable enough for them to remain.

[129] Adamec 1974, 237 and 258.

the late 1940s came from the United States, particularly grains, cloth, oil, and automobiles.[130] New York replaced Leipzig and London as the international centre for karakul sale.[131] Thus, the United States quickly became Afghanistan's main trading partner in the post-war period. In 1948, half of the 700 foreigners in Kabul were American. 'Abd al-Majid travelled to Washington to negotiate a commercial agreement, hoping for financial advisors, an improved market for Afghan goods in the US, and an American supervised commercial school in Kabul. To show how eager Afghanistan was for American support, it placed a $30 million road contract with the US firm Morrison-Knudsen to construct dams on the Kabul, Helmand, and Arghandab rivers.[132] In 1949, Afghanistan was hoping for a large loan from the United States, and by December 1950, the American Export-Import Bank extended $21 million to Afghanistan.[133]

Just as Afghanistan began to rely on the economic assistance of the United States, between 1949 and 1951, the American ambassador in Kabul was Jewish. Before being promoted to ambassador, Louis Dreyfus worked with international Jewish organisations while posted in Iran, and maintained these connections in Afghanistan. In November 1949, the Jewish Agency in Teheran contacted him, and asked him to appeal to the Afghan government to overturn its ban on granting passports to Jewish citizens.[134] It appears that he was successful, and he seems to have played a pivotal role in allowing the legal exodus of Jews from Afghanistan. His letters survive in the National Archives of the United States, and they are friendly and convivial. Dreyfus must have been well received among Afghan officials, who welcomed his opinions, and responded in

[130]See for example, IOL L/PS/12/1554, Appendixes A-D, 7-14, which dramatically shows how the United States sold 20.4 million of the total 27.9 million rupees (or 73%) of all products imported into Afghanistan in 1947.

[131] IOL L/PS/12/1553, Report on the Economic Situation in Afghanistan 1946, 54.

[132] USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Afghanistan: Kabul – General Records 1948, box 16, no. 800 Political Afghanistan, "U.S. Influence Grows in Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor,* 17 December 1948; "Calendar of H.E. Abdul Majid Khan's meetings in Washington;" and *New York Times*, 27 November 1948.

[133] IOL L/WS/1/1169, Possibility of War between Pakistan and Afghanistan: Draft Report by the Joint Intelligence Committee, 8 July 1949, 86.

[134] CZA S6/6787, Zion Cohen (Teheran) to the Department of 'Aliya (Tel Aviv), 24 November 1949, written as a summary of letters on 6 December 1949.

kind.[135] Permission for the Jews to leave may have been granted out of personal courtesy towards Louis Dreyfus.

Emigration Commences

Several months after diplomatic initiatives started at the World Jewish Congress in February 1950, and at the United Nations, the Tel Aviv Va'ad learned that the Afghan government had changed its policy. It started to grant passports to five Jewish families every week. Numbers were kept small because Afghanistan wanted to be considerate of the position of the Muslim world towards Israel, and did not want to make a bad impression upon them. In response, the Tel Aviv Va'ad sent similar letters to the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency, each differing in tone. It thanked the World Jewish Congress for its fruitful efforts, and told the congress to share the good news with all interested institutions. One week later, the Tel Aviv Va'ad contacted the Immigration Department, and simply asked if the agency could arrange for 'aliya through their Teheran offices.[136] This cool tone underscores the difficulties inherent in the relationship between the Jewish Agency and groups advocating on behalf of Afghanistani Jewry.[137]

When the Tel Aviv Va'ad sent these two letters, it underscored the importance of *not* publicising this relaxation of Afghan policy. In September 1950, the newspaper *Ha-Boker* enquired about Bukharan emigration from Afghanistan. The Jewish Agency

[135] The files of the American embassy are peppered with references to social interactions with Muhammad Zahir Shah, Shah Wali Khan, Muhammad Naim Khan and other high officials, reflecting an informal, helpful tone, which I have not encountered in British sources. See for example, USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 84, Afghanistan – Kabul 1947, box 13, no. 843, Women's Welfare Society.

[136] CZA S6/6787, M. H. Agajan, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan to the head of the World Jewish Congress (both in Tel Aviv), 30 April 1950; and Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei 'Olei Afghanistan (Tel Aviv) to Y. Rafael, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 5 May 1950.

[137] Interestingly enough, some of these same tensions are present today over Jews from northern Ethiopia remaining in a compound in Addis Ababa. Those settled in Israel and groups like the North American Council on Ethiopian Jews lobby the Israeli government for more 'aliya, yet the government resists these appeals. This is possibly due to an overly conservative rabbinate, which has Halachic questions about their 'legitimacy' as Jews, as some did convert under duress. It may also be due to racism. Similar impediments were not placed in front of Soviet Jewry, although there are estimates that a significant minority of those currently in Israel are not Halachically Jewish.

told the paper that while it negotiated with the Afghan authorities, the agency was not allowed to fly a plane into Afghan territory. The Immigration Department warned the editorial board of the newspaper not to publish an account of the "flight" of Jews from Afghanistan, and especially not to describe their departure as "fleeing." *Ha-Boker* followed these instructions.[138]

A short time later, Zvi Cynowicz, the well-meaning chairman of the Bombay Zionist Organisation, broke the story, which was then carried by the *Jerusalem Post*.[139] Cynowicz had sometimes been criticized within the internal documents of the World Jewish Congress for his lack of reliability and exaggeration. The head of the London office of the World Jewish Congress, Alexander Easterman, wrote to New York about his concerns over Cynowicz. Easterman noted "the motif of his periodical and spasmodic calls upon us to take emergency action in crises which seem to crop up in obscure parts of the Orient. I have never regarded this gentleman as being a model of exactness or a purist."[140] As an example of this, in 1950, Cynowicz claimed that his organisation was appealing on behalf of the Jews of Afghanistan "as their only spokesmen and their only liaison with the outside Jewish World."[141] This was certainly an overstatement. It may have only been accurate between 1947 and 1949 for the Jewish community in Kabul after Peshawar was abandoned. When Jews in Kabul wrote to the Israeli ambassador in Moscow, they specifically mentioned that they could be contacted through Cynowicz.[142] Regardless of the difficulties he encountered in convincing his superiors to act, Cynowicz worked tirelessly on behalf of Afghanistani

[138] CZA S6/6787, Secretary of the Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem) to the editorial board of *Ha-Boker* (Tel Aviv), 29 September 1950.

[139] CZA S5/11616, "Afghan Jews on Their Way," *Jerusalem Post,* 2 November 1950.

[140] CZA C2/1659, World Jewish Congress correspondence, Alex Easterman (London) to Maurice Perlzweig (New York), 23 February 1950, and also letters between Perlzweig (New York) to Easterman (London), 20 February 1950, and Easterman (London) to Robert Marcus (New York), 13 February 1950.

[141] CZA C2/1659, Cynowicz, Bombay Zionist Association to World Jewish Congress, Political Department (New York), 1 February 1950.

[142] Letter written to the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow from Jews in Kabul and sent on 6 February 1949, as reproduced by Kashani (May 1980): 12-13, quoting Mordechai Namir, *Shlihot ba'Moskva*, 349.

Jews in Bombay, to the point of physical collapse. He drew attention to their plight when many others were silent.[143]

Hostility to Mizrahim is linked to derogatory references to American Jews. The British critic of Cynowicz, Alexander Easterman, was also harshly disposed towards the political director of his own organisation's New York office. Easterman felt that Robert Marcus had an "irrepressible impulse to indulge in diplomatic cannonades on the slightest provocation and on the flimsiest pretexts." He thought that Marcus fed the sensationalism of the American Jewish press, assuming that their readers were:

> just gasping to know about the ills and troubles of the Jews of Timbuktu and what not, that a quiver of excitement runs through the five million American Jews when they read that Dr. Marcus, P.D. [Political Director] of the World Jewish Congress has written to the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the Deputy Assistant Vice Under Secretary of the State of Dahomay. ... Never mind, if my geography is all askew and my diplomatic titles mixed up.[144]

Another letter written ten days previously also expresses personal hostility that Easterman was not consulted when Marcus wrote to the Afghan Ambassador in Washington. Easterman clearly felt slighted.[145]

These intemperate letters from Easterman illustrate some of the factors that can shape institutional dynamics, especially when different agencies and offices try to coordinate policy across continents. It also offers a window into intra-Jewish 'wrangling' and the difficulty of co-ordinating diverse sets of suffering and needs, from the aftermath of the Holocaust to the exodus of Jews from the Muslim world.[146] As the above example demonstrates, individual egos were also involved, and the slight that Easterman felt translated into condescention.

[143] CZA S6/5404, J.J. Gubbay, President of Bombay Zionist Association to J.N. Behar, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 16 October 1947.

[144] CZA C2/1659, A.L. Easterman (London) to M.L. Perlzweig (New York), 23 February 1950.

[145] CZA C2/1659, A.L. Easterman (London) to R.S. Marcus (New York), 13 February 1950.

[146] "Israel to claim billions from Muslim states for 900,000 Jewish refugees" *Jerusalem Report*, 16 December 2002, 6.

Mizrahi communities often faced prejudice when interacting with Jewish organisations, and after arriving in Israel. Evidence of this discrimination is certainly present for the Jews of Afghanistan, notably when visas were denied for Shmuel Dadash and the other prisoners. In the 1930s, Anglo-Jewish prejudice was directed against Mizrahi communities as a whole. The Jews in Afghanistan fared particularly poorly, as the Board of Deputies and the leaders of Anglo-Jewry followed the advice of the British Foreign Office and diplomatic corps. The experiences of the community in Afghanistan were not well understood, and as a small, remote group, they were easy to dismiss. Perhaps what is most amazing is how much of their suffering was transmitted. One of the lessons absorbed by the Holocaust was that all Jews, religious and secular, practicing or converted, even Christians with one Jewish grandparent, shared the same fate. The Jewish world took this lesson to heart. After the European community was decimated, Jewish organisations dramatically shifted their focus, and started lobbying on behalf of Mizrahim with even more unity and passion.[147]

While Anglo-Jewry embraced the plight of Mizrahi communities, Mizrahim now looked to the government of Israel, particularly the Jewish Agency and the Immigration Department. When the mass exodus started in Afghanistan, the Jewish community found itself increasingly frustruated. Some of this discontent was channelled through the va'adot, or organisations established by Jews from Afghanistan in Israel. The va'adot were concerned that Israeli authorities were allowing their relatives to suffer needlessly in Teheran while they waited to make 'aliya.

Afghanistani Jews Entering and Languishing in Iran

Despite official permission being granted, there were still many obstacles to 'aliya. After permission was secured, most Jews in Afghanistan prepared to leave the home of their birth in the summer of 1950. Travel was far easier in the summer months, and they were afraid that the government would reverse its position. The

[147] For a British example of post-war attitudes towards Mizrahim, see BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/31.

Jewish Agency encouraged its contact in Herat, Mullah Asher Gargi, to send community members through Iran and not India. On 8 June Yitzhak Rafael, the Director of the Immigration Department explained that the department was waiting for immigration to begin from Afghanistan. He knew that a small migratory movement had already commenced, and now he expected groups of around one hundred each to start on their way.[148]

The logistics of thousands of hungry, poor Afghanistani Jews converging on Teheran meant that a crisis larger than the one that Bombay's Jewish community faced was about to commence. Once again, misinformation was transmitted and weakened individuals suffered needlessly. Yitzhak Rafael notified the Jerusalem Va'ad that the first group of fifty *'olim* or immigrants was to be arriving via Teheran in August 1950.[149] He continued, "We hope that the 'aliya will continue in larger dimensions. ...I ask you to help and support them. The members of your community will need to support them in their process of absorption."[150] One wonders if this letter may have also precipitated a refugee crisis in Teheran, which was to become very much like the one in Bombay several years earlier. Perhaps the Va'ad wrote to Jews in Afghanistan and told them to get ready to leave as they did in 1947. It is more likely that the community inside of Afghanistan needed very few external stimuli to encourage emigration, as they had wanted to leave for many years.

According to letters found in the Central Zionist Archives, by the autumn of 1950, the organisations of Jews from Afghanistan in Israel were getting increasingly upset. They worried that their relatives in Teheran were at risk of starvation. They were also concerned that the gates of 'aliya might close just as suddenly as they had opened, and wanted to make sure that all could get out in time. The quota of only fifty allowed to

[148] CZA S6/6787, Daniel Gol, Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan to Yitzhak Rafael, Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem) 24 Av 5710 (7 August 1950); and Yitzhak Rafael, Jewish Agency to Va'ad Edat Sefardim (both in Jerusalem), 8 June 1950.

[149] *'Olim* (pl.) are those who are literally 'ascending' or making *'aliya.*

[150] CZA S6/6787,Yitzhak Rafael to Daniel Gol, 26 Av 5710 (9 August 1950).

emigrate each month was deemed woefully inadequate, as 3,000 wanted to leave.[151] At this time, the Joint Distribution Committee was also aware of the Jewish Agency's shortcomings. Its members wondered why there were no links between the agency's welfare offices and those of immigration. As one source says, this was considered ill advised, and could "cause ends which aren't good."[152] The Joint Distribution Committee wanted immigration to be linked to assistance, so that 'olim would not be placed in jeopardy. Yet, they did not want to be the only organisation providing for those in Teheran. The committee felt it was best if emigration from Afghanistan would be limited to the number of Jews allowed to enter Israel each month.

However wise, the Jewish Agency was unable to achieve even this simple goal.[153] Just as in Bombay, the employees of the Jewish Agency transmitted faulty information that caused further suffering. In fact, it was only after those who were suffering hunger and homelessness in Teheran wrote to their relations and warned them to remain in Afghanistan or even Mashhad, that the tide ebbed. The Tel Aviv Va'ad told Rafael that they received worrying letters from Teheran detailing the emigrants' difficulties: how most stayed in Iran a long time, and how the Jewish Agency showed little concerned for them. The Va'ad reminded him of the condition of Afghanistan's Jewry. Its letter concluded by saying: "We are an exceptional community. Not one of us leaves Israel [after arrival]. We do all kinds of jobs and professions through the love of the homeland. We are asking you to get them out of Iran as soon as possible."[154]

A new va'ad formed in Tel Aviv echoed these concerns. The Committee to Care for Immigrants from Afghanistan wrote a memo in the autumn of 1950 (presumably to the Jewish Agency, though it is not clear) entitled "Saving the Jews of Afghanistan

[151] CZA S6/6787, Daniel Gol, Va'ad Edat Yehudei Afghanistan to Yitzhak Rafael, Jewish Agency (both in Jerusalem), 27 Tishri 5711 (Fall 1950)

[152] CZA S6/6787, S. Passman, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (Tel Aviv) to Yitzhak Rafael, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 24 October 1950.

[153] Ibid, and CZA S6/6787, Afghani Refugees (Teheran) to the Director of the Immigration Department, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 30 January 1952.

[154] CZA S6/6787, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan (Tel Aviv) to Yitzhak Rafael (Jerusalem), sent 21 Av 5711, received 24 August 1951.

from the Danger of Expulsion from Iran and their 'Aliya to the Land [Israel]."[155] This described how Jews from Afghanistan had flowed into Teheran for the last five months, but that no one helped them. Only one hundred of the 1,000 waiting arrived in Israel by November 1950. The writers felt that the Jewish Agency did not show the same level of concern for them as it had showed other communities. The va'ad asked "and what if their blood drops? They are also Jewish!" They were furious that the Jewish Agency failed to carry through with its promises, as Jews from Afghanistan were liable for deportation from Iran if they did not leave within three months. The va'ad was worried that if the immigrants returned to Afghanistan, their route to Israel could be blocked for a long period of time, as it had been fourteen years since the border was last open to Jews. One last item angered the va'ad, which was how residents of Teheran, at no risk of homelessness or deportation, were allowed to immigrate before those far more vulnerable.[156]

Another letter sent from *'plitei Afghanim'* or literally "Afghani refugees" in Teheran to the immigration department in Jerusalem details their conditions and frustrations of life in Iran.

> We are Afghan refugees who arrived in Mashhad after great suffering ... There we received information by telegraph to come to Teheran. It has been eight months that a part of our people has been wandering around Teheran without accommodation or medical care, living in filthy [lit: pestilence] rooms, paying 400-600 rials per month as rent. ... There remains nothing for us to cover our bodies from the elements, such is the hard shame that is found in Teheran.
>
> The Jewish Agency in Teheran did not extend a helping hand to us, and did not support us in any way. They once gave us 12,800 rials, but took out 2,800 to arrange our passports. In this country, we are under pressure of the government, as soon our passports will expire. I ask of you to consider our present situation and to care for the wretched Afghans like you care for Jews from other countries. For twenty years, we lived under the pressure of the Afghan government and in that entire period, they stole from us the right to engage in the export-import trade. We have become wretched in Iran.

[155] CZA S6/6787, letter entitled: "Saving the Jews of Afghanistan from the Danger of Expulsion from Iran and their 'Aliya to the Land," Ha-Va'ada l'Tipul b'Olei Afghanistan (The Committee to Care for Immigrants from Afghanistan), 1 November 1950.

[156] Ibid.

> We see our only hope, principally from G-d, and after that from you, leaders of the people. Do something for us, for the sake of G-d, Moses, and Our Holy Torah. Find some remedy for the crushing of our hearts, because we are unable to take more of this situation here in Teheran.[157]

This letter clearly describes conditions the agency was ignoring, and explains how misinformation propagated by the Jewish Agency led to further sorrow for Jews from Afghanistan.

The identity of the Jews from Afghanistan also shifts. This letter is almost fully secular, in stark contrast to those received from the Herati and Kabuli communities several years previously. Individuals began to identify themselves as Afghans [literally: *Afghanim* – using a Hebraicised plural] instead of simply as Jews from Afghanistan. This shows the beginning of a recognision of the way they are viewed outside of Afghanistan. In preparation for joining an environment overwhelmingly Jewish, the community distinguishes itself through its origin in Afghanistan.[158] In leaving, one allegiance shifts back to the land of their birth.

Various associations of Afghanistani Jews in their land of origin, or further removed in Iran, India, and to a lesser extent, in Israel, all tried to project their conception of a *kehilah kedosha* -- a holy community or congregation on to the framework of the emerging state of Israel.[159] They expected that the state would care for its citizens and troubled Jews around the world in a way that was similar to their own internal parameters of mutual support. While Socialist ideals were incorporated into the foundation of the state of Israel, they were in no way as elaborate as the mechanisms for support within the Jewish community in Afghanistan. As shown in the above example, Jews from Afghanistan who were waiting in Teheran were upset that

[157] CZA S6/6787, communal letter from Afghani refugees (Teheran) to the Director of the Office of Immigration, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 30 January 1952.

[158] In some ways, this may be similiar to the way Hazaras are also called 'Afghan' in Iran.

[159] CZA S6/6787, Va'ad Hitahadut Yehudei Olei Afghanistan (Tel Aviv) to Yitzhak Rafael, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 21 Av 5711, received 24 August 1951.

the offices of the Jewish Agency did not appear to be concerned about their welfare.[160] They were disappointed, as the transferring of communal values on to a nation-state proved impossible. It was a harsh awakening, and these individuals were shocked to find fellow Jews behaving so poorly towards them. In January 1952, those waiting in Teheran asked Yitzhak Rafael to "find some remedy for the crushing of our hearts, because we are unable to take more of this situation here."[161] After some time in Israel, and with the foundation of several va'adot, the immigrants from Afghanistan began to be aware of the Jewish government's limitations. Then, this emphasis shifted to targeting policies that appeared to be inherently unfair, and dependent upon geography. The va'adot drew attention, for example, to the partial treatment that they felt Ashkenazim received over Mizrahim. It is undeniable that European Jewry received better treatment than those from Africa or Asia.[162]

The shortcomings of the Jewish Agency became starkly apparent outside of Teheran. In Bombay, Zvi Cynowicz also was concerned, and transmitted his feelings to Yitzhak Rafael. He wrote that at the rate the Jews from Afghanistan were being absorbed into Israel, it would take fifty months for all to arrive there, and they were afraid that the government would forbid emigration once again. Cynowicz noted that they made the journey to Teheran independently, but that once they arrived in the city, their situation became even more difficult. He noted that they did not go to the *ma'abarot* (rudimentary tent cities for new immigrants, similar to refugee camps) but almost all were cared for by family or community members.[163] Yitzhak Rafael informed Cynowicz that the 'aliya from Afghanistan started in December 1950, when the first group left Teheran for Tel Aviv. He hoped that in January one hundred to 150 more would be allowed to emigrate. Rafael wrote that due to the "pressure from other

[160] Ibid.

[161] CZA S6/6787, Afghani refugees (Teheran) to director of department of immigration, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 30 January 1952.

[162] Prof. David Rabeeya of Bryn Mawr College described being sprayed with DDT on the tarmac after his arrival from Bagdad at the Lod airport. Immediately afterwards, the family's name was changed, and they were dropped off at a camp near Beersheva. Though a child, he did not attend school again until after completing the army. David Rabeeya, *The Journey of an Arab Jew in European Israel: An Anthology* (published on the web by Xlibirs, February, 2001). Barer also describes how Yemeni Jews were sprayed with DDT and inoculated before making 'aliya. Barer, 51.

[163] CZA S6/6787, Zvi Cynowicz (Bombay) to Yitzhak Rafael (Jerusalem), 10 December 1950.

places, we can't allocate more for Afghan Jews. There is no place for a hurried exit from there." He described meeting new arrivals from Afghanistan and told Cynowicz "all those who have influence must use it, as the exit will be slow." Rafael mentioned Iranian police brutality, and ascribed their suffering to the lack of a timely movement to Israel. Still, he showed no willingness to speed up their immigration process.[164]

It is ironic that the brutality of the Teherani police force was responsible for a swifter migration. In Teheran, Jews from Afghanistan were joined by those fleeing Iraq. The situation endured by Iraqi Jews was far more violent than that of Afghanistan, and they suffered greater privation in fleeing to Iran. In 1935, teaching Hebrew was declared illegal, and Jews were forbidden from employment in the public sector. In 1941, when Rashid Ali's pro-Axis government fell, there were riots against the Jews in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, and other towns.[165] In Baghdad alone, it was estimated that 150 were killed, 700 wounded, 900 homes burned, and 600 businesses looted. Another pogrom occurred in July 1946. In May 1948, the community was subjected to further terror, including widespread arrests, torture, and extortion. An Egyptian newspaper noted approvingly that the municipality had gained more revenue from targeting its wealthy Jewish citizens than it had from "all the measures hitherto taken by the Egyptian authorities." Consequently, many in the Jewish community risked a long prison term, and fled. In November 1949, Zion Cohen reported that 400 were in camps in Teheran and another hundred had just crossed the border. He expected that more would arrive as winter conditions worsened, for there would be fewer border guards on patrol.[166] Martial law had been enacted on 14 May 1948, and being a 'Zionist' meant a seven-year prison sentence along with a confiscation of all property. In December 1949, martial law and mass arrests ended, yet thousands continued to flee. On 9 March 1950, the government allowed legal emigration *if* Jews would give up Iraqi nationality. This meant that the state gained all Jewish wealth and

[164] CZA S6/6787, Rafael to Cynowicz, 15 January 1951. "Those gathered in Teheran and Mashhad have met great suffering and persecution from the police, because they haven't been able to emigrate quickly."

[165] For a description of events, see Robinson, 56.

[166] CZA C2/1659, Memorandum on the Treatment of the Jewish population in Iraq, from World Jewish Congress, New York City, 22 October 1949.

property, as adults were only allowed to take fifty dinars out of the country. Approximately $200 million was collected between May and August 1950, when 110,000 immigrated to Israel.[167] Sometimes immigration took longer, and on 14 February 1952, it was reported that of the 3,000 waiting in Iran's capital, 400 were from Afghanistan, and 2,000 were Iraqi. Ten days later, the Teheran office noted that ninety-two had flown out, and they were trying to have them leave as quickly as possible because the police did not want them in the city.[168] Efforts were speeded up, and most Jews from Afghanistan and Iraq were able to leave.

Some authors who rely upon media accounts state that legal Jewish immigration from Afghanistan began in 1951.[169] However, a widespread relaxation of policy, with legal immigration to Israel allowed, commenced in October 1950.[170] Perhaps, the international press became aware of this new situation early in 1951, as other newspapers took notice of the articles published in the Jewish (especially English-speaking) press. By 1952, most reached Israel.[171]

A case study may serve to illuminate the experience of this migration. One family, interviewed by the newspaper *Al Ha-Mishmar* twenty-eight years after their immigration to Israel in 1952, told the following story to the journalist:

> they sold their possessions for a small amount of money and got on their way. From Herat they traveled by bus to Salam-Kala [Eslam Qal'a]. Then they crossed the border to Yusuf[a]bad. There they took a bus to Mashhad, and waited for four months until their time came to go to Teheran. They spent four months in Teheran, as there was a long line at the offices of the Jewish Agency. They slept in the streets and then afterwards rented a room with three other families. Finally, their time

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[167] *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 1971 ed., s.v. "Iraq."

[168] CZA S6/7301, telegram from Datner (Teheran) to Rafael (Jerusalem), 14 February 1952; and Y. Datner to Y. Rafael, 24 February 1952

[169] See for example: Antony Lerman et al, eds. *The Jewish Communities of the World* (London: Macmillian, 1989), 1.

[170] Ludwig Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan,* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1991), 259.

[171] According to Yehoshua 1992, 303, citing the *Yearbook of the Central Office of Statistics* in Israel, 2,303 Jews arrived from Afghanistan between 1948-1951, and 795 between 1952-54. Yet, these numbers do not seem to match those found in the documents of the Central Zionist Archives. Perhaps, the majority of Jews in Afghanistan reached Israel by 1952, but 1951 seems slightly premature.

came to emigrate by airplane, and the journey took six hours. They arrived in the Promised Land – it was like a dream.[172]

Several points are particularly interesting in this account. While the family was initially homeless in Teheran, nothing is mentioned of their time in Mashhad. One can then assume that their conditions were better, due to the assistance of the Jadid al-Islam community. The director of the Department of Immigration, Yitzhak Rafael asked the Mashhadis to care for the Afghanistanis like brothers, but in fact this was unnecessary as they had been caring for Jews from Afghanistan since at least 1856.[173] In February 1952, a Jewish Agency employee in Teheran noted that the Mashhadis had been paying for everything that the Afghanistanis needed, and wondered if they should receive reimbursement. (One may be justified in assuming that they did not.)[174] Also remarkably, while they seemed to describe most of their journey in a dispassionate way, the joy of arrival was expressed in a more emotional, immediate way. One can be almost certain that it is in their voice, as the phrase is in keeping with the traditional model of the arrival of G-d in Zion.[175]

Situation Improves After 1952

The story of the Jews of Afghanistan is in some ways a micro-history. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Israeli immigration authorities were overwhelmed by two waves of Jewish refugees, those from war-torn Europe and those (600,000) fleeing the Arab world. Jews from Afghanistan only represented one per cent of those who left Asia between 1948 and 1972.[176] Not all Jews left in the 1950s, and small communities remained in both Kabul and Herat until the Soviet invasion in 1979. Despite considerable improvements, they were still bound by some vestiges of the shirkat

[172] Gaon, 4.

[173] See chapter 2.

[174] CZA S6/6787, Y. Rafael (Jerusalem) to Yaacov Weinstein, Department of Immigration (Teheran), 23 May 1950; and Eliezer Ben-Dov (lieutenant chief of the Department of Immigration (Teheran) to the Department of Immigration, Jewish Agency (Jerusalem), 28 February 1952.

[175] CZA S5/11616, Herati Jews to the Government of Israel, 23 Sivan 5709.

[176] According to Yehoshua and the *Yearbook of the Central Office of Statistics* in Israel, 333,868 came from Asia with 3,757 of them from Afghanistan. Yehoshua 1992, 303.

system, which did not allow Jews legally to partake in international commerce.[177] However, their social and economic position was significantly better than that faced by previous generations. When crises occurred, the community had considerably more ability to effect change than they had in the 1930s and 1940s.

Forcible Conversion in the 1950s: Tova Shamualoff's Kidnapping

Perhaps the most significant event recorded in British archives after most of the community made 'aliya, was the kidnapping of a teenaged girl in Kabul. This incident was made known to the Board of Deputies, and was apparently the impetus for one of their last endeavours to assist the Jewish community in Afghanistan. In November 1955, the Board of Deputies received a translated copy of a letter sent from Kabul by the father of the thirteen-year-old in question. Mayer Shamualoff describes how his daughter did not return home from school on the first day of Ramadan. He went to the police immediately, and they searched for his daughter Tova throughout the night. By the next afternoon the police commissioner informed him that his child had been located, but that she wished to convert to Islam. For the next two weeks, the police took no further action. However, Shamualoff learned that Tova was:

> in the lock up and was denied any food or bedding. Further she was being beaten with canes ... and being compelled to accept Muslim faith. She was further told ... that she had already been declared to have accepted Islam and if she now said that she wanted to become a Jew again ... she would be tortured, treated by brick bats and stones and killed in this way. The information leaked out to us from the lock up that my daughter was in great trouble, and in a very helpless condition.[178]

As he told the Board, the father, Meyer Shamualoff then went to the Deputy Prime Minister of Kabul, Wali 'Ali Muhammad Khan, who also promised to help, but then did nothing. In desperation, Shamualoff visited the King's summer palace at Paghman, and presented his petition as Muhammad Zahir Shah passed in a street procession. The next

[177] Interview with Eliahu Bezalel, Ramat Gan, Israel, 12 July 2001.

[178] BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/3, letter from Meyer Shamualoff of 5 Elul 5715 (23 August 1955), commencing "For Immediate Attention and Indulgence of Jew Brethren."

day, Shamualoff was summoned to the King's garden and waited for three or four hours as the Deputy Prime Minister deliberated. Finally, it was agreed that Tova would be returned to her family. Yet, despite these high-level discussions and promises, she was still not returned. The heartbreak comes through clearly in the father's final statements to the Board (spelling and grammar as in original):

> On Afghan Independence Day my wife went to Ladies garden and accidently met our daughter there. She beseeched her to get her freed from these people as she wanted to meet her father and family members and come back to them. I am a middle class man and have spent all my resources to get back my beloved child. We are totally upset with her separation and her torture and distress. I have been threatened that if I took any further steps to get back my daughter, the Mohammdens at Kabul would attack all jews and kill them all. So I have neither strength nor voice and influence as there is no democratic or lawful rule in Kabul where I could place my grievence and be heard. I therefore humbly approach and request jewish brethren outside, to use all means at their command to restore my beloved child to me.[179]

After receiving this letter in London, the Board asked to meet with the Afghan ambassador. Najibullah Khan explained to the Secretary of the Board of Deputies that as Tova had reached the age of "legal majority" she was entitled to "adopt a way of life" of which her parents might disapprove. The Afghan Ambassador went on to outline the official government position towards its Jewish population. As the community ebbed away throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the government's position certainly softened. Such a conciliatory letter would not have been written twenty years earlier.

> [T]he Jewish community enjoys all the rights and privileges of an Afghan citizen and there is no communal distinction in Afghanistan. We have Afghan Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs and Jewish people living side by side and enjoying the same rights. Our Jewish friends abroad may have noticed that, notwithstanding a lot of problems between Jews and non-Jews, there was not a single case in Afghanistan so I can assure you and

[179] Ibid.

> your friends that we consider our Jewish nationals as loyal citizens of the country and as dear to us as any other national community.[180]

This exchange shows that the idea of civic equality began to be recognised. Strikingly, Najibullah Khan stresses that all religions in Afghanistan have the same rights. This was simply not the case, as one could not even imagine an equivalent outcome if a Muslim schoolgirl proclaimed her wish to convert to Judaism. Nonetheless, Afghanistan may have been acceding to some of the values subscribed to by the larger community of nations in the late 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, it is extraordinary that Meyer Shamualoff was able to petition the Deputy Prime Minister and the King, and that his concerns were addressed even in a cursory manner.

There is no further documentation of Tova's plight, in the London Metropolitan Archives or elsewhere. However, Leah Dil who emigrated in the mid-1970s, told the author of the outcome. According to her account, during that fateful summer day in 1955, Tova got to know a young Muslim boy, and went home with him. She may have wanted to marry him, or this may have been forced upon her. It is uncertain what precisely happened (since Leah Dil's account differs from that of the letter in the Board of Deputies' archives.) The extent of the boy's participation in Tova's kidnapping is unclear. It is agreed that eventually her family, assisted by the entire Kabuli Jewish community, bribed some officials, and on the very evening that the bribe was given, Tova was returned home.[181] As an adult, Leah Dil lived on the same street as Tova did in Kabul. She felt that the Kabuli community's strength explained how they were able to secure Tova's release. In earlier generations, children abducted from their families would be lost forever, but Tova's case shows that in the mid-1950s, some amount of legal resource was permitted, while police bribery ultimately prevailed.[182]

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[180] BoD ACC 3121/C11/13/3, Najibullah Khan, Royal Afghan Embassy to A.G. Brotman, Secretary Board of Deputies (both in London), 18 November 1955.

[181] Tova's later life has been marked both by ancient customs and modern warfare. Her first husband, who was Jewish, was killed during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and she then married his brother in a levirate marriage. She now lives in Israel with her four or five children.

[182] See Mordekhai Batchaev, *La Vie de Yaquv Samandar ou Les Revers du Destin.* Translated by Catherine Poujol (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992).

In Herat, however, it was more difficult, as the community was poorer and therefore weaker, and Shi'i animosity was far greater. Also, being only a regional centre, the Herati community did not have direct access to the highest levels of government. Leah Dil told this author that when she was growing up in Herat in the 1950s, not all girls went to school, and those who went did not attend for long. This was due to the widespread fear that they might be abducted. They did not attend secondary school, and when Dil ventured outside of home, her grandmother would tell her to cover her two long plaits, and not go too far away, as Muslims might steal her.[183]

The Last Two Jews in Kabul

By 1960, only several hundred Jews remained in Afghanistan, and by 1971, this number had fallen to twenty-five families in Kabul and Herat.[184] Many left after 1967, during the Six Day War when soldiers had to be called in to protect the two remaining communities. One informant also explained that Israel's capture of the Western Wall was viewed as a continuation of biblical prophecy, hastening the arrival of the Messiah.[185] The last rabbi left in 1988, and communal prayers (which require a quorum or *minyan* of ten adult men) were last said in Afghanistan in 1990. A few families who had remained throughout Soviet rule left by 1992. At the time of writing, there are currently two older men living in Kabul, named Isaac Levy and Zebulon Simantov, who both claim (to foreign journalists) the role of sole caretaker to the synagogue and cemetery. While living on the grounds of the synagogue, and sharing a kitchen, the two are engaged in an elaborate feud, which appears to have originated over the ownership of once-communal property. Each one blames the other for personal woes, including arrest and imprisonment under the Taliban, as well as confiscation of the community's last Torah scroll. According to the journalist Tim Judah, Levy was also imprisoned after being accused of the crime of reading women's fortunes. The younger of the two, Simantov left Afghanistan in the early 1990s, and settled for a time in Turkmenistan with his wife and children. After they immigrated to Israel, however, he returned to Kabul in 1999. Levy has never left Kabul, and has refused several offers of

[183] Interview with Leah Dil, Holon, Israel, 9 July 2001.
[184] Kashani 1961, 25; and E.G. Lowenthal,19.
[185] Interview with Eliahu Bezalel, Ramat Gan, Israel, 12 July 2001.

transportation to Israel. While the story of the last two cantankerous remnants of this commuity makes for colourful reading, there are fewer Jews in Afghanistan now than perhaps even after the Mongols decimated the region in the thirteenth-century.[186] Most Jews who originated in Afghanistan live in Israel, though there is also a community in New York. Some are even found as far away as Bangkok, engaged in the colored gem trade, preserving some of their forebearers' ancient economic patterns in a new, distant setting.[187]

[186] Tim Judah, "A Very Private War," *Guardian Weekend,* 5 January 2002, 36-8; and Tasgola Karla Bruner, "Home Alone with the Taliban," *Jerusalem Report,* 3 January 2000, 32-3.

[187] Tibor Krausz, "The Colors of Money," *Jerusalem Report,* 13 August 2001, 30-34.

Conclusion

> *The two synagogues of the 'Jewish Mosque' are dusty and empty. Birds have built nests in the lamps, and prayer books and ragged talets [sic] (prayer shawls) lie unused on the shelves along with a shofar, or ram's horn, that in happier times was used on high holy days. In one of the synagogues are stacks of mouldering possessions belonging to people who have long since left or died.*[1]

This recent journalistic description of Kabul's crumbling Jewish infrastructure is symbolic of the fate of the community. Congruently, the aim of this thesis was to reconstruct the history of Afghanistani Jewry from a wide number of sources, before it also fades away. Despite modern decay, and the limits of memory, some of the detail and wealth of past events can emerge through patient research. It is hoped that by linking the history of the Jewish community to that of Afghanistan, both are further enriched.

Often the history of the Jews is too small to be found in general works on Afghanistan or Mizrahi Jewry. However, the modern history of the Jews in Afghanistan is also directly linked to trading opportunities. As a result of commerce, business and family ties were established with distant places. This enabled the record of this community to be preserved, while so many other histories in Afghanistan remain obscured. Through international commercial connections, the Jews of Afghanistan formed an unusual link to Europe and Eretz Yisrael. When their plight worsened, they were able to inform British, American, Indian, and Israeli officials through elaborate channels of communication based on the karakul trade. Economic ties are the only reason why this social history has been preserved. As such, it is unusual and precious; for so many other recorded histories of Afghanistan have been lost.

[1] Judah, 37.

By tracing the economic patterns of the 1930s and 1940s, the experience of the Jewish community is brought into further relief. This approach has not been utilized before, though it provides vital information as to the reasons for expulsion from the northern tier of Afghanistan and the hostility the community endured under the weight of nationalistic economic policy. Without an understanding of the Jewish economic niche, and atypical domestic arrangements, it is difficult to understand the severity of the restrictions imposed against them, and why they led to the demise of the community.

The ways that economic development was pursued in Afghanistan caused the impoverishment and persecution of marginal members of society. The monopoly system was devastating for non-Muslim minorities. This thesis has argued that the Ministry of National Economy and monopolist ventures like the Bank-i Milli, pursued discriminative political action through the guise of economic development. The monopolist system linked the economy to nationalist rationale. The structure of economic development pursued by the state of Afghanistan had a distinctly political role, to limit and protect against Soviet influence. This was particularly devastating for the Jewish community as they were often suspected of owing their primary allegiance to the Soviet Union, and working on its behalf.

Ernest Gellner's description of Diaspora nationalism provides further depth to a study of the Jews of Afghanistan. He explains that economic strength and a distinct culture combined with political and military weakness can lead to suffering and even the destruction of a community as the impact of development changes the attitudes of the elite and majority population. The government may choose to appease wide swatches of the population through the persecution of entrepreneurial minorities.[2] In Afghanistan, entrepreneurial minorities could have paved the way towards development, but their marginal status precluded participation. In fact, nascent economic nationalism led to the downfall of the Jewish community. Jews were unable to become part of the conception of an Afghan nation.

[2] Gellner, 105-7.

Part of this estrangement may have been based on Afghan elites taking Germany as a model for nationalism. On the basis of material available, certain Afghan leaders, notably 'Abd al-Majid Khan, attempted to follow Germany. The Minister of National Economy's importance cannot be underestimated during Muhammad Hashim Khan's regency. 'Abd al-Majid Khan was consumed by the goal of ridding 'foreigners' from Afghanistan's business community, to the extent that older systems were destroyed. While the theme of economic nationalism was invoked, its benefits did not reach beyond the Pashtun elite. Much of the populace suffered needlessly from inflation and shortages, and radical programs were approved as a way of containing the Soviet Union's influence in Afghanistan. This fear of communism meant that strategies based on far more developed economies were applied – to disastrous results. 'Abd al-Majid Khan was also allowed to pursue political action through the guise of economic development. Consequently, Jews and some Central Asian Muslims who settled in Northern Afghanistan became internally displaced, and refugees once again.

In the search to root out 'foreigners,' different groups of minorities suffered. The experiences of the Hindu community often mirror those of the Jews, yet even fewer sources appear to be available on that history. Other non-Pashtun groups also were considered to be outside the Afghan community, and consequently suffered discrimination. They included large portions of the general population, especially those ethnicities of the north who absorbed refugees, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmen, along with Hazaras and Nuristanis.

Nazi influence is the most contentious aspect of the historiography of this community. While difficult to verify, it was certainly present in the economic sector. 'Abd al-Majid Khan was a pivotal figure in the dissemination of modern, racial anti-Semitism. Some of his prejudice was clearly motivated by a desire for personal wealth, and a fear of communism. However, when examined along with larger currents in Afghanistan, one can find a syncretic approach to anti-Semitism. Traditional forms of religious anti-Semitism found in the Muslim world were accompanied by newer

European forms especially those invoked by the German conception of an Aryan race. As the war continued, and the atrocities of the Third Reich became apparent, racial anti-Semitism as espoused by the elites faded, while older, popular forms thrived. This was especially true when the urban population suffered from a chaotic economy and a drought. Guiding the economy actually worsened the situation and impeded development.

When the state of Israel was established, the Jews had a series of religious, economic, and social reasons to leave Afghanistan. They were overjoyed by Israel's creation, and waves of messianic Zionism coursed through the community. Heartfelt letters infused with religious language were sent to Israeli officials, describing the tribulations they faced, including discrimination and deprivation. Soon, however, the Jewish communities in Kabul and Herat were disappointed as the bureaucratic inefficiency of the Jewish Agency became apparent. Those waiting to make 'aliya in India felt the full weight of these difficulties, and their situation deteriorated into a full-blown refugee crisis. As the process of immigration was disorganized, arguments between the Jewish Agency and the va'adot representing Afghanistani Jewry in *Eretz Yisrael* increased. By 1949 the most significant impediment to 'aliya disappeared, as Muhammad Zahir Shah allowed legal emigration from Afghanistan. This may have been due to a series of reasons, including the desire for American friendship, international support for the creation of Pashtunistan, and belief in a link between the Afghans and the ancient lost tribes of Israel.

This work fits easily into Judaic studies, and supplements studies done on Iranian and Bukharan communities, as well as that of other isolated Mizrahi groups. It augments the earliest ethnographic research of Jewish communities, and gives a deeper context to the pioneering work of Erich Brauer. This is the only study on the Jewish community of Afghanistan which uses archival material in English, especially the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the India Office, and the National Archives of the United States, and fully explores the economic history of the community.

There are rich congruities between the political and economic history of Afghanistan and one of its smallest minorities, though this connection has not been previously explored. This thesis provides a detailed example of what can happen to entrepreneurial minorities when the larger society begins to confront nationalism and industrialization. It contributes to the history of Afghanistan by providing a detailed description of the forces that brought about the destruction of the Jewish community. With the exception of Vartan Gregorian, no wider history of Afghanistan has described the Jewish experience correctly. It is hoped that this thesis will be used by other scholars of Afghanistan, as a way to provide accurate historical information about the Jewish community, and the political, social, and economic forces they encountered.

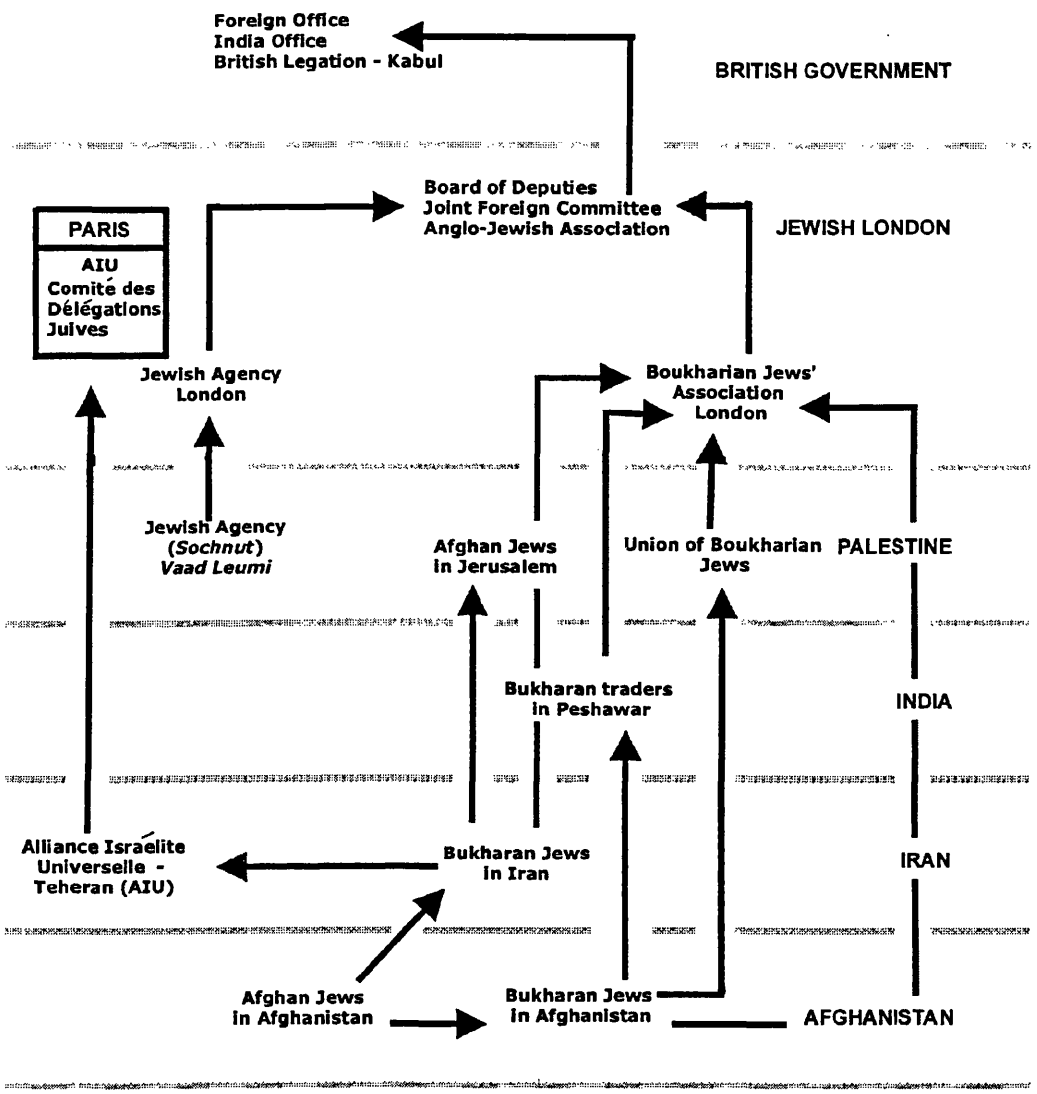
This work distinguishes itself by concentrating on a detailed historical accounting of the demise of the Jewish community. It is almost a micro-history, however, by concentrating on the details of a small group's experiences, a great deal of clarity regarding larger trends emerges. In fact, their history may be seen as a microcosm of the convulsions of the twentieth century. The community's experiences also foreshadow the larger traumas of the emerging Afghan nation – of great suffering and dispersal.

This thesis has recounted the last chapter of the Jewish community in Afghanistan. It linked Jewish history to the larger currents through archival research. Generally, the Jewish and Muslim histories of Afghanistan have been recorded separately. In Judaic studies, a cursory, often inaccurate examination of larger trends is presented, while the descriptions of the majority history generally ignore minority experience. While two works have been translated into English, the history of the Jews of Afghanistan has been written in Hebrew, and this thesis represents the most significant contribution made outside of Israel. It is hoped that this work supplements the history of minorities in Afghanistan, and that in future, those with stronger language skills will be able to uncover sources in Dari, Pashtun, and Russian, filling in additional information, and leading to more complete explanantions.

This work is a case study of the failure of Afghanistan to absorb the talents of its non-Islamic minorities. A microcosm of future failures can be viewed within this limited history. Perhaps one source of these lost opportunities may be traced as far back as the reign of 'Abd al-Rahman Khan in the late nineteenth-century. When this amir chose to eschew economic development to retain more political autonomy, and destroyed traditional patterns of co-existence and tolerances, he passed on a bitter legacy. These policies were reinforced by other leaders, and continued to have detrimental effects throughout the twentieth century. While later witnessed on a mass scale, even in the 1930s and 40s, these patterns were apparent in miniature, through the history of the Jewish community. In many ways, Afghanistan still faces challenges surrounding this legacy, as questions of political autonomy, economic development, tolerance for ethnic minorities and the last, largest group of those with 'protected, yet second class status' – women, are far from being resolved.

pendix 1

Patterns of Jewish Correspondence in the 1930s



Appendix 2: Letter from the Jewish Community of Herat to the Government of Israel, 20 June 1949

To Your Honour, the High and Mighty Government of Israel – Shalom!

With great pleasure we send to the heights of the mountains of Zion to Your Excellency, our original, hearty, and eternal greetings. We express with a full heart our feelings that you [...] will be triumphant forever. We bless you with the blessing '[G-d] who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this day.' For thousands of years, the People Israel were in exile and scattered, under a foreign yoke. Their wandering feet did not find rest, and their hope was to find the day of salvation and now this day has come. 'This is the day that G-d has made for us, let us rejoice in it.' Now, in the End of Days, from a flight of trouble and distress, G-d has enlightened the People Israel with salvation and bravery. The Holy People of Israel was filled with bravery to achieve its precious land and sit on its throne of high governance – the Excellency of 'the Messiah – G-d of Jacob.' Your Honour, we are in the darkness of bitter exile, and do not feel the sweetness of the shining light upon us, and it is like we are dreaming. As it is written: 'When G-d returns to Zion, we will be as if dreaming.' We believe that G-d has sworn an eternal covenant to bring us back to the Land, and even if this day of wandering was very long, and our people were scattered from one side of the heavens to another, we still hope that the time has come to return to our homeland, and to renew our youth in the land, like an eagle. From now on, we have no choice but to pray before G-d and the One who brings Salvation, to strengthen the hands of those who defend our country, the Holy Land, and to raise up our Messiah and to draw together all the members of our scattered people, Amen.

After all this, we have to let you know, Your Excellency, how horrible our low situation is. Everyday our Exile becomes greater, we are left without work, all the doors of commerce are locked to us, all the gates of the land are closed to us. Nobody can come or go, neither from inside nor from outside. Exile causes us such grief, we don't have any more strength to suffer, to make a livelihood, or provide for the necessities of life. We sold all our household goods, and we are left with empty hands, and we don't know what will become of us, and therefore we turn to you, asking Your Excellency to help us as soon as possible, for if our Exile continues for more months, all of us will be lost from lack of means to support ourselves. Please, please, please we beg you that as long as we are still alive, spare us, have mercy upon us. You have a duty and a mitzvah to take care of these thousand souls of Israel, as it is expressed in the Gemarrah: 'If one saves a life of Israel, it is as if the whole world has been saved.'

Until now, we have not sent you a letter of greeting and request, because there was no post between the government of Israel and the Afghan government, and also we are in danger in the midst of our Exile. For all of this we ask your pardon, it has been for the past fifteen years or more, that the majority of our population emigrated to the Land, and we were separated: a man from his brother, a father and a mother from their son, and a brother from his brother and sister. We received news from them that some joined the Israeli army or other governmental offices, and we did not know what had become of them, until a letter came from the community of Afghanistan in Israel that among those who died [in the 1948 war], twenty-four were from the our community, and they were murdered, may G-d avenge their blood, and the blood of all of our brothers. When this sad news arrived in our community, one eye shed tears, and the other eye was happy that they were killed for our people, and for the cities of our G-d in our native land [moledet]. May G-d save their souls. And what is more, their government takes care of their relations and gives them their reward. Yet, we cannot take care of all of our needs. If the style of this letter is not beautiful, we beg your pardon, and we will keep it short, instead of prolonging it, and therefore, we pray to G-d that we shall soon see each other and the face of 'The Messiah, the G-d of Jacob' and the rest of the ministers of the government of our land, the Land of Israel. Shalom from the Holy Community [k'k] of Herat, Afghanistan.

This is the day that we hope for, let us rejoice in it, it has been for 2,000 years that the People Israel has been in exile, and now the time has come for the prophets' visions to come true. 'To gather you up from heaven with me.' Now this Day of Salvation has come to the entire People Israel who are in exile. Yet, this time is troublesome for us, as we are in great danger in the midst of the Exile of Ishmael, but we hope we will be saved from that through the grace of G-d and through Your Honour's help, and we hope for your salvation and also for your response. May you have Peace forever, Amen.

Signed by the humble Yosef Cohen and the Cohen of the pitied community, Mr. Shmuel Cohen.[3]

[3] CZA S5/11616. Letter of 23 Sivan 5709, 20 June 1949 from the Jewish community of Herat to the Government of Israel, an accurate copy provided by the Va'ad Hitahadut Olei Afghanistan, Tel Aviv. With special thanks to Nili Heled for help translating this document.

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